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THE GREAT INITIATES

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THE GREAT INITIATES

SKETCH OF THE SECRET HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

PYTHAGORAS—PLATO—JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

"The Soul is the key of the Universe"

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CONTENTS

PYTHAGORAS

AND THE DELPHIC MYSTERIES

CHAP. PAGE

I. Greece in the Sixth Century . . 3

II. Years of Travel 12

III. The Temple of Delphi 32

The Science of Apollo—Theory of Divination—The Pythoness Theoclea.

IV. The Order and the Doctrine . . 63

The Test—First Degree: Preparation—Second Degree: Purification—Third Degree: Perfection—Fourth Degree: Epiphany.

V. Marriage of Pythagoras—Revolution at Croton—The Master's End—The School and its Destiny . . . 162

PLATO

THE MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS

I. The Youth of Plato and the Death of Socrates 185

II. The Initiation of Plato and the Platonic Philosophy 200

III. The Mysteries of Eleusis . . . 213

JESUS

THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Condition of the World at the Birth of Jesus	247
II.	Mary—First Development of Jesus	267
III.	The Essenes — John the Baptist — The Temptation	281
IV.	The Public Life of Jesus—Popular and Esoteric Instruction — Miracles — Apostles—Women	307
V.	Struggle with the Pharisees — Flight to Cæsarea—The Transfiguration	327
VI.	Final Journey to Jerusalem — The Promise—The Supper—Trial of Jesus —Death and Resurrection	345
VII.	The Promise and its Fulfilment—The Temple	388

PYTHAGORAS
AND THE DELPHIC MYSTERIES

"Know thyself, and thou wilt know the Universe and the Gods."—*Inscription on the Temple of Delphi.*

Evolution is the law of Life,
Number is the law of the Universe,
Unity is the law of God.

PYTHAGORAS

CHAPTER I

GREECE IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

THE soul of Orpheus had passed like a divine meteor across the troubled heavens of a new-born Greece. When the meteor had disappeared, the land was again wrapt in darkness. After a series of revolutions, the tyrants of Thrace committed his books to the flames, overthrew his temples and drove away his disciples. The Greek kings and numerous cities followed this example, more jealous of their unbridled licence than of that justice which is the source of pure doctrine. They were determined to efface his very memory, to leave no sign of his existence, and they succeeded so well, that, a few centuries after his death, a portion of Greece even doubted whether he had ever lived. It was in vain that the initiates kept alive his tradition for over a thousand years ; in vain that Pythagoras and Plato spoke of him as

divine ; the sophists and the rhetoricians saw in him no more than a legend regarding the origin of music. Even at the present time, savants stoutly deny the existence of Orpheus, basing their assertion on the fact that neither Homer nor Hesiod mentioned his name. The silence of these poets, however, is fully explained by the interdict under which the local government had placed the great initiator. The disciples of Orpheus lost no opportunity of rallying all the powers under the supreme authority of the temple of Delphi, and never tired of repeating that the differences arising between the divers states of Greece must be laid before the council of the Amphictyons. This was displeasing to demagogues and tyrants alike. Homer, who probably received his initiation in the sanctuary of Tyre, and whose mythology is the poetical translation of the theology of Sanchoniathon, Homer the Ionian might very well have known nothing of the Dorian Orpheus whose tradition was kept all the more secret as it was the more exposed to persecution. As regards Hesiod, who was born near Parnassus, he must have known the name and doctrine of Orpheus through the temple at Delphi ; but silence was imposed on him by his initiators, and that for good reasons.

And yet Orpheus was living in his work, in his

disciples, and even in those who denied his very existence. What is this work? where can the soul of his life be sought? In the ferocious, military oligarchy of Sparta, where science was despised, ignorance erected into a system, and brutality exacted as being the complement of courage? In those implacable wars of Messenia in which the Spartans were seen persecuting a neighbouring people to the point of extermination, and these Romans of Greece preparing for the Tarpeian rock and the bleeding laurels of the Capitol by hurling the heroic Aristomenes, the defender of his country, into an abyss? Or should it rather be sought in the turbulent democracy of Athens, ever ready to convert itself into a tyranny? Or in the praetorian guard of Pisistratus, or the dagger of Harmodius and Aristogiton, concealed under a myrtle branch? Or in the many towns and cities of Hellas, of greater Greece and Asia Minor, of which Athens and Sparta offer us two opposing types? Is it in any of these envious, these jealous democracies and tyrannies, ever ready to tear one another into pieces?—No; the soul of Greece is not there. It is in her temples, her mysteries and their initiates. It is in the sanctuary of Jupiter at Olympia, of Juno at Argos, of Ceres at Eleusis; it reigns over Athens with Minerva, it sheds its beams over Delphi with

Apollo, who penetrates every temple with his light. Here is the centre of Hellenic life, the heart and brain of Greece. Here come for instruction poets who translate sublime truth into living images for the masses, sages who propagate these truths in subtle dialectics. The spirit of Orpheus is felt wherever beats the heart of immortal Greece. We find it in poetry and gymnastic contests, in the Delphic and Olympian games, a glorious project instituted by the successors of the Master with the object of drawing nearer together and uniting the twelve Greek tribes. We are brought into direct contact with it in the court of the Amphictyons, in that assembly of the great initiates, a supreme, arbitrary tribunal, which met at Delphi, a mighty centre of justice and concord, in which alone Greece recovered her unity in times of heroism and abnegation.[1]

And yet Greece in the time of Orpheus; her intellect, an unsullied, temple-guarded doctrine; her soul, a plastic religion; and her body, a lofty

[1] The *Amphictyonic oath* of the allied peoples gives some idea of the greatness and social might of this institution: "We swear that we will never overthrow Amphictyonic towns, never, during either peace or war, prevent them from obtaining whatever is necessary for their needs. Should any power dare to attempt this, we will march against it and destroy its towns. Should impious hands remove the offerings of the temple of Apollo, we swear that we will use our feet, our arms, our voice, and all our strength against them and their accomplices."

court of justice with Delphi as its centre, had begun to decline early in the seventh century. The orders sent out from Delphi were no longer respected, the sacred territories were violated. The race of men of mighty inspiration had disappeared, the intellectual and moral tone of the temples deteriorated; the priests sold themselves to politicians. From that time the Mysteries themselves became corrupted.

The general aspect of Greece had changed. The old sacerdotal and agricultural royalty was succeeded either by tyranny pure and simple, by military aristocracy, or by anarchical democracy. The temples had become powerless to check the threatening ruin. A new helper was needed. It was therefore necessary to popularize esoteric teaching. To enable the thought of Orpheus to live and expand in all its beauty, the knowledge of the temples must pass over to the lay classes. Accordingly, under different disguises, it penetrated the brains of civil legislators, the schools of the poets, and the porticoes of the philosophers. The latter felt in their teachings the very necessity Orpheus had recognized in religion, that of two doctrines; the one public and the other secret, manifesting the same truth in different degree and form, and suited to the development of the pupil. This evolution

gave Greece her three great centuries of artistic creation and intellectual splendour. It permitted the Orphic thought, at once the initial impulse and the ideal synthesis of Greece, to concentrate its entire light and radiate it over the whole world, before her political edifice, undermined by internal dissensions, tottered beneath the power of Macedonia and finally crumbled away under the iron hand of Rome.

Many contributed to the evolution we are speaking of. It brought out natural philosophers like Thales, legislators like Solon, poets like Pindar, and heroes like Epaminondas. It had also a recognized head, an initiate of the very first rank, a sovereign, organising, creating intelligence. Pythagoras is the master of lay as Orpheus is the master of sacerdotal Greece. He translates and continues the religious thought of his predecessor, applying it to the new times. His translation, however, is a creation, for he co-ordinates the Orphic inspirations into a complete system, gives scientific proof of them in his teachings and moral proof in his institute of education, and in the Pythagorean order which survived him.

Although appearing in the full light of historical times, Pythagoras has come down to us as almost a legendary character. The main reason for this is

the terrible persecution of which he was the victim in Sicily, and which cost so many of his followers their lives. Some were crushed to death beneath the ruins of their burning schools, others died of hunger in temples. The Master's memory and teaching were only perpetuated by such survivors as were able to escape into Greece. Plato, at great trouble and cost, obtained through Archytas a manuscript of the Master, who, it must be mentioned, never transferred to writing his esoteric teachings except under symbols and secret characters. His real work, like that of all reformers, was effected by oral instruction. The essence of the system, however, comes down to us in the *Golden Verses* of Lysis, the commentary of Hierocles, fragments of Philolaus and in the Timaeus of Plato, which contains the cosmogony of Pythagoras. To sum up, the writers of antiquity are full of the spirit of the Croton philosopher. They never tire of relating anecdotes depicting his wisdom and beauty, his marvellous power over men. The Neoplatonists of Alexandria, the Gnostics, and even the early Fathers of the Church quote him as an authority. These are precious witnesses through whom may be felt continually vibrating that mighty wave of enthusiasm the great personality of Pythagoras succeeded in communicating to Greece, the final

eddies of which were still to be felt eight hundred years after his death.

His teaching, regarded from above, and unlocked with the keys of comparative esoterism, affords a magnificent whole, the different parts of which are bound together by one fundamental conception. In it we find a rational reproduction of the esoteric teaching of India and Egypt, which he illumined with Hellenic simplicity and clearness, giving it a stronger sentiment and a clearer idea of human liberty.

At the same time and at different parts of the globe, mighty reformers were popularizing similar doctrines. Lao-Tse in China was emerging from the esoterism of Fo-Hi ; the last Buddha Sakya-Mouni was preaching on the banks of the Ganges ; in Italy, the Etrurian priesthood sent to Rome an initiate possessed of the Sibylline books. This was King Numa, who, by wise institutions, attempted to check the threatening ambition of the Roman Senate. It was not by chance that these reformers appeared simultaneously among such different peoples. Their diverse missions had one common end in view. They prove that, at certain periods, one identical spiritual current passes mysteriously through the whole of humanity. Whence comes it ? It has its source in that divine world, far away

from human vision, but of which prophets and seers are the envoys and witnesses.

Pythagoras crossed the whole of the ancient world before giving his message to Greece. He saw Africa and Asia, Memphis and Babylon, along with their methods of initiation and political life. His own troubled life resembles a ship driving through a storm, pursuing its course, with sails unfurled, a symbol of strength and calmness in the midst of the furious elements. His teachings convey the impression of a cool, fragrant night after the bitter fire and passion of an angry, blood-stained day. They call to mind the beauty of the firmament unrolling, by degrees, its sparkling archipelagoes and ethereal harmonies over the head of the seer.

And now we will attempt to set forth both his life and his teaching apart from the obscurities of legend and the prejudices of the schools alike.

CHAPTER II

YEARS OF TRAVEL

At the beginning of the sixth century before our era, Samos was one of the most flourishing islands of Ionia. Its harbour fronted the violet peaks of a slumbering Asia Minor, the abode of luxury and charm. The town was situated on a wide bay with verdant coasts, and retreated, tier upon tier, up the mountain in the form of an amphitheatre, itself lying at the foot of a promontory on which stood the temple of Neptune. It was dominated by the colonnades of a magnificent palace, the abode of the tyrant Polycrates. After depriving Samos of her liberty he had given the island all the lustre of art and Asiatic splendour. Courtesans from Lesbos had, at his bidding, taken up their abode in a neighbouring palace, to which they invited the young men and maidens of the town. At these *fêtes* they taught them the most refined voluptuousness, accompanied with music, dancing and feasting. Anacreon, on the invitation of Polycrates, was transported to Samos in a trireme with purple sails and gilded masts ; the poet, a goblet of chased

silver in his hand, sang before this high court of pleasure his languishing odes. The good fortune of Polycrates had become proverbial throughout Greece. He had as a friend the Pharaoh Amasis, who often warned him to be on his guard against such unbroken fortune, and above all not to pride himself on it. Polycrates answered the Egyptian monarch's advice by flinging his ring into the sea. "This sacrifice I offer unto the gods," he said. The following day a fisherman brought back to the tyrant the precious jewel, which he had found in the belly of a fish. When the Pharaoh heard of this, he said he would break off his friendship with Polycrates, for such insolent good fortune would draw down on him the vengeance of the gods. Whatever we may think of the anecdote, the end of Polycrates was a tragic one. One of his satraps enticed him into a neighbouring province, tortured him to death, and ordered his body to be fastened to a cross on Mount Mycale. And so, one evening as the blood-red orb of the sun was sinking in the west, the inhabitants of Samos saw the corpse of their tyrant crucified on a promontory in sight of the island over which he had reigned in glory and abandonment.

To return to the beginning of Polycrates' reign. One star-lit night a young man was seated in a

wood of agnus castus, with its glimmering foliage, not far from the temple of Juno, the Doric front of which was bathed in the rays of the moon, whose light added to the mystic majesty of the building. A papyrus roll, containing a song of Homer, had slipped to the ground, and lay at his feet. His meditation, begun at twilight, was continued into the silence of the night. The sun had long ago disappeared beneath the horizon, but its flaming disc still danced in unreal presence before the eyes of the young dreamer. His thoughts had wandered far from the world of visible things.

Pythagoras was the son of a wealthy jeweller of Samos and of a woman named Parthenis. The Pythoness of Delphi, when consulted during a journey by the young married couple, had promised them : "a son who would be useful to all men and throughout all time." The oracle had sent them to Sidon, in Phoenicia, so that the predestined son might be conceived, formed, and born far from the disturbing influences of his own land. Even before his birth the wonderful child, in the moon of love, had been fervently consecrated to the worship of Apollo by his parents. The child was born ; and when he was a year old his mother, acting on advice already received from the priest of Delphi, bore him away to the temple of Adonaï, in a valley

of Lebanon. Here the high priest had given him his blessing and the family returned to Samos. The child of Parthenis was very beautiful and gentle, calm and sedate. Intellectual passion alone gleamed from his eyes, giving a secret energy to his actions. Far from opposing, his parents had encouraged him in his precocious leaning towards the study of wisdom. He had been left free to confer with the priests of Samos and the savants who were beginning to establish in Ionia schools in which the principles of natural philosophy were taught. At the age of eighteen he had attended the classes of Hermodamas of Samos, at twenty those of Pherecydes at Syros; he had even conferred with Thales and Anaximander at Miletus. These masters had opened out new horizons, though none had satisfied him. In their contradictory teachings he tried to discover the bond and synthesis, the unity of the great whole. The son of Parthenis had now reached one of those crises in which the mind, over-excited by the contradictions of things, concentrates all its faculties in one supreme effort to obtain a glimpse of the end, to find a path leading to the sun of truth, to the centre of life.

Throughout that glorious night Pythagoras fixed his gaze on the earth, the temple, and the starry heavens in turn. Demeter, the earth-mother, the

Nature whose secrets he wished to pierce, was there, beneath and around him. He inhaled her powerful emanations, felt the invincible attraction which enchained him, the thinking atom, to her bosom, an inseparable part of herself. The sages he had consulted had said to him : "It is from her that all springs. Nothing comes from nothing. The soul comes from water, or fire, or from both. This subtle emanation of the elements issues from them only to return. Eternal Nature is blind and inflexible, resign thyself to her fatal laws. The only merit thou wilt have will be that thou knowest them, and are resigned thereto."

Then he looked at the firmament and the fiery letters formed by the constellations in the unfathomable depths of space. These letters must have a meaning. For if the infinitely small, the movement of atoms, has its *raison d'être*, why not also the infinitely great, the widely scattered stars, whose grouping represents the body of the universe ? Yes ; each of these worlds has its own law ; all move together according to number and in supreme harmony. But who will ever decipher the alphabet of the stars ? The priests of Juno had said to him : "This is the heaven of the gods, which was before the earth. Thy soul comes therefrom. Pray to them, that it may mount again to heaven."

These meditations were interrupted by a voluptuous chant, coming from a garden on the banks of the Imbrasus. The lascivious voices of the Lesbian women, in languishing strains, were heard accompanying the music of the cithara, responded to in the Bacchic airs chanted by the youths. Suddenly other cries, piercing and mournful, from the direction of the harbour, mingled with these voices. They were the cries of rebels whom Polycrates was embarking to sell as slaves in Asia. They were being struck with nail-studded thongs, to compel them to crouch beneath the pontoons of the rowers. Their shrieks and blasphemous cries died away in the night, and silence reigned over all.

A painful thrill ran through the young man's frame; he checked it in an attempt to regain possession of himself. The problem lay before him, more pressing and poignant than before. Earth said: *Fatality.* Heaven said: *Providence.* Mankind, between the two, replied: *Madness! Pain! Slavery!* In the depths of his own nature, however, the future adept heard an invincible voice replying to the chains of earth and the flaming heavens with the cry: *Liberty!* Who were right? sages, or priests, the wretched or the mad, or was it himself? In reality all these voices spoke the truth, each triumphed in his own sphere, but none gave

up to him its *raison d'être*. The three worlds all existed, unchangeable as the heart of Demeter, the light of the constellations and the human breast, but only the one who could find agreement between them and the law of their equilibrium would be truly wise; he alone would be in possession of divine knowledge and capable of aiding mankind. It was in the synthesis of the three worlds that the secret of the *Kosmos* lay!

As he gave utterance to this discovery he had just made, Pythagoras rose to his feet. His eager glance was fixed on the Doric façade of the temple; the majestic building seemed transfigured beneath Diana's chaste beams. There he believed that he saw the ideal image of the world and the solution of the problem he was seeking. The base, columns, architrave, and triangular pediment suddenly represented, in his eyes, the triple nature of man and the universe, of the microcosm and the macrocosm crowned by divine unity, itself a trinity. The Kosmos, controlled and penetrated by God, formed

"The sacred Quaternion, the source of Nature; whose cause is eternal." [1]

Yes, here concealed in these geometrical lines was the key of the universe, the science of numbers,

[1] *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras.*

the ternary law regulating the constitution of beings, and the septenary law that governs their evolution. Pythagoras saw the worlds move through space in accordance with the rhythm and harmony of the sacred numbers. He saw the balance of earth and heaven of which human liberty holds control; the three worlds, the natural, the human, and the divine, sustaining and determining one another, and playing the universal drama in a double—ascending and descending—movement. He divided the spheres of the invisible enveloping the visible world and ever animating it; finally, he conceived of the purification and liberation of man, on this globe, by triple initiation. All this he saw, along with his life and work, in an instantaneous flash of illumination, with the absolute certainty of the spirit brought face to face with Truth. Now he must prove by Reason what his pure Intelligence had obtained from the Absolute, and this needed a human life; it was the task of a Hercules.

Where could he find the knowledge necessary to bring such a labour to a successful issue? Neither the songs of Homer, nor the sages of Ionia, nor the temples of Greece would suffice.

The spirit of Pythagoras, which had suddenly found wings, began to plunge into his past life,

into his mist-enveloped birth and his mother's mysterious love. Childhood's memory returned to him with striking clearness. He recalled the fact that his mother had carried him in her arms, when only a babe of twelve months, to the temple of Adonaï, in a vale of Lebanon. He saw himself again as a child, clinging to the neck of Parthenis, with mighty forests and mountains all around, whilst the river formed a waterfall close by. She was standing on a terrace shaded with giant cedars. In front of her stood a majestic-looking, white-bearded priest, smiling on the mother and child as he uttered grave-sounding words the little one did not understand. Often had his mother brought back to his mind the strange utterance of the hierophant of Adonaï: "O woman of Ionia, thy son shall be great in wisdom ; but remember that, though the Greeks still possess the science *of the gods*, the knowledge *of God* can no longer be found elsewhere than in Egypt." These words came back to him along with his mother's smile, the old man's beautiful face, and the distant murmur of the waterfall dominated by the priest's voice, with that magnificent scenery all around, like the dream of another life. For the first time he guessed the meaning of the oracle. He had indeed heard of the wonderful knowledge of Egyptian priests and their

dreadful mysteries, though he thought he could do without it all. Now he understood that he needed this "science of God," to penetrate to the very heart of nature, and that he could find it only in the temples of Egypt. It was the gentle Parthenis who, with maternal instinct, had prepared him for this work, and borne him as an offering to the sovereign God! From this moment he made up his mind to go to Egypt, and there undergo initiation.

Polycrates prided himself on being the protector of philosophers as well as of poets. He willingly gave Pythagoras a letter of recommendation to Pharaoh Amasis, who introduced him to the priests of Memphis. The latter were opposed to receiving him, and were induced to consent only with the utmost difficulty. Egyptian sages distrusted Greeks, whom they charged with being fickle and inconstant. They did all they could to discourage the young Samian. The novice, however, submitted with unfaltering patience and courage to the delays and tests imposed on him. He knew beforehand that he would only attain to knowledge by entirely mastering his will throughout his entire being. His initiation under the pontificate of Sonchis the high priest lasted twenty-two years. All the trials and temptations, the soul-rending

dread and ecstatic joy passed through by Hermes, the initiate of Isis, even to the apparent, or cataleptic death of the adept and his resurrection in the light of Osiris, were experienced by Pythagoras, so that he now realized, not as a vain theory, but as something lived through, the doctrine of the Logos-Light, or of the universal Word, and that of human evolution through seven planetary cycles. At each step of this giddy ascent the tests became more formidable. A hundred times the risk of death was incurred, especially if one's object was to gain control over occult forces, and attain to the dangerous practice of magic and theurgy. Like all great men, Pythagoras believed in his star. No path that led to knowledge disheartened him, the fear of death could not check him, for he saw life beyond. When the Egyptian priests had recognized that he possessed extraordinary strength of soul and that impersonal passion for wisdom, which is the rarest thing in the world, they opened out to him the treasures of their experience. Whilst with them he daily improved, and became filled with divine knowledge. He mastered sacred mathematics and the science of numbers, or universal principles, which he formulated anew and made the centre of his system. The severity of the Egyptian discipline in the temples also impressed on him the prodigious

power of the human will when wisely trained and exercised, the endless applications, both to body and to soul, that can be made of it. "The science of numbers and the art of will-power," said the priests of Memphis, "are the two keys of magic; they open up all the gates of the universe." It was in Egypt that Pythagoras obtained that view from above, which allows of one seeing the spheres of life and the sciences in concentric order, and understanding the *involution* of the spirit into matter by universal creation, and its *evolution* or re-ascent towards unity by way of that individual creation called the development of a consciousness.

Pythagoras had reached the summit of Egyptian priesthood, and was perhaps thinking of returning to Greece, when war, with all its misery, burst upon the valley of the Nile, carrying away the initiate of Osiris in another direction. The despots of Asia had long been meditating the ruin of Egypt. Their repeated attacks had failed, for centuries past, before the wisdom of the Egyptian institutions, the power of the priesthood, and the energy of the Pharaohs. But the refuge of the science of Hermes, the kingdom from time immemorial, was not to remain for ever. Cambyses, son of the conqueror of Babylon, descended on Egypt with his innumerable hosts, famished as clouds of locusts,

and put an end to the institution of the Pharaohs, the origin of which was lost in the night of time. In the eyes of the sages this was a catastrophe for the whole world. Hitherto Egypt had sheltered Europe against Asia. Her protecting influence still extended over the whole basin of the Mediterranean, by means of the temples of Phoenicia, Greece, and Etruria, with which the high Egyptian priesthood were in constant connection. This rampart once overthrown, the Bull, with lowered head, was about to burst upon the land of Greece. Pythagoras saw Cambyses invade Egypt, he may have beheld the Persian despot, worthy scion of the crowned villains of Nineveh and Babylon, plunder the temples of Memphis and Thebes, and destroy that of Ammon. He may have seen the Pharaoh Psammitichus brought in chains before Cambyses, placed on a mound, and surrounded by the priests, the principal families, and the royal court. He may have witnessed the Pharaoh's daughter, clad in rags and followed by all her maids of honour similarly demeaned, the royal prince and two thousand young men, brought forward, bit in mouth and bridle on neck, before being beheaded ; the Pharaoh Psammitichus, choking back his sobs before the frightful scene, and the infamous Cambyses, seated on his throne, gloating over the anguish of his vanquished

enemy. Cruel though instructive is this lesson of history after that of science! What a picture of the animal nature let loose in man, culminating in this monster of despotism who tramples everything under foot, and, by his horrible apotheosis, imposes on humanity the reign of a most implacable destiny!

Cambyses had Pythagoras taken to Babylon, with a portion of Egyptian priesthood, and kept him within the gates.[1] This colossal city, which Aristotle compares to a country surrounded by walls, offered at that time an immense field for observation. Ancient Babel, the great prostitute of the Hebrew prophets, was more than ever, after the Persian conquest, a pandemonium of nations, tongues, and religions, in whose midst Asiatic despotism raised aloft its dizzy tower. According to Persian tradition, its foundation dates back to the legendary Semiramis. She it is who was said to have constructed the monster *enceinte*, over fifty miles in circumference: the Imgur-Bel, its walls on which two chariots ran abreast, its superimposed terraces, massive palaces with polychrome reliefs, temples supported on stone elephants and surmounted by many-coloured dragons. There had followed in succession the series of despots who had

1 Iamblichus relates this fact in his *Life of Pythagoras*.

brought into subjection Chaldea, Assyria, Persia, a part of Tartara, Judaea, Syria, and Asia Minor. Hither Nebuchadnezzar, the assassin of the magi, had led captive the Jewish people who continued to practise their religion in one corner of the immense city which would have contained London four times over. The Jews had even given the great king a powerful minister in the person of the prophet Daniel. With Balthazar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the walls of the old Babel had finally disappeared beneath the avenging hand of Cyrus, and Babylon passed for several centuries under Persian rule. By reason of this series of preceding events, at the time Pythagoras came there, there were three different religions side by side in the high priesthood of Babylon: the ancient Chaldean priests, the survivors of the Persian magi, and the *élite* of the Jewish captivity. The proof that these different priesthoods were in mutual agreement, on the esoteric side, is found in the part played by Daniel, who, whilst acknowledging the God of Moses, remained first minister under Nebuchadnezzar, Balthazar, and Cyrus.

Pythagoras was now obliged to enlarge his horizon, already so vast, by studying these doctrines and religions, the synthesis of which was still preserved by a few initiates. In Babylon he

was able to thoroughly study the knowledge in the possession of the magi, the heirs of Zoroaster. Though the Egyptian priests alone possessed the universal keys of the sacred sciences, the Persian magi had the reputation of carrying further the practice of certain arts. They claimed to control those occult powers of nature called pantomorphic fire and astral light. In their temples, it was said, darkness reigned in broad daylight, lamps were lit without human agency, the radiance of the Gods was visible and the rumble of thunder could be heard. The magi gave the name of *celestial lion* to this incorporeal fire, the agent that generates electricity, which they could condense or disperse at will, and that of *serpents* to the electric currents of the atmosphere and the magnetic currents of the earth, which they claimed to be able to direct like arrows against mankind. They had also made a special study of the suggestive, attractive, and creative power of the human word. To evoke spirits they employed graduated formulas, borrowed from the most ancient languages on earth. The following is the psychic reasoning they themselves gave thereof: "Make no change in the barbarous names employed in evocation; for they are the pantheistic names of God; they are magnetized with the worship of multitudes, and their power is

ineffable."[1] These evocations, accompanied by prayer and purification, were, properly speaking, what was called at a later date, white magic.

Accordingly we now see Pythagoras in Babylon, penetrating the arcana of ancient magic. At the same time, in this den of despotism, he witnessed a glorious spectacle ; on the ruins of the crumbling religions of the East, above their decimated and degenerate priesthood, a band of dauntless initiates, grouped together, were defending their science, their faith, and as well as they could, justice. Boldly facing the despots, like Daniel in the den of lions, ever prepared to be torn to pieces, they tamed and fascinated the wild beast of absolute power by their intellectual might, disputing, foot by foot, the ground they had won.

After his Egyptian and Chaldean initiation, the child of Samos knew far more than his teachers of natural philosophy, far more than any Greek, either priestly or laic, of his time. He was acquainted with the eternal principles of the universe and their application. Nature had opened up to him her secrets; the gross veils of matter had been torn from his eyes, enabling him to see the marvellous spheres of nature and spiritualized humanity. In the temples of Neith-Isis in Memphis, and Bel in

[1] *The Oracles of Zoroaster*, taken from the theurgy of Proclus.

Babylon, he had learned many secrets as to the past history of religions, continents, and races. He had been able to compare the advantages with the disadvantages of the Jewish monotheism, the Greek polytheism, the Hindu trinitarianism, and the Persian dualism. He knew that all these religions were rays of one same truth, strained down through different degrees of intelligence and intended for different social conditions. He held the key, *i.e.* the synthesis of all these doctrines, in esoteric science. His vision, compassing the past and plunging into the future, was bound to judge the present with singular lucidity. His experience showed him humanity threatened with the most terrible evils, through the ignorance of the priests, the materialism of the savants, and the lack of discipline in the democracies. In the midst of this universal decay he saw Asiatic despotism increase; from this dark cloud a terrible cyclone was about to burst upon defenceless Europe.

Accordingly it was now the hour to return to Greece, there to fulfil his mission and begin his work.

Pythagoras had been kept in Babylon for twelve years. To leave the city, an order from the king of Persia was necessary. Democedes, a compatriot of his and the king's physician, interceded in his

favour and obtained liberty for the philosopher. After an absence of thirty-four years Pythagoras returned to Samos. He found his country crushed and ruined by a satrap of the great king. Schools and temples were closed, poets and savants had fled like a cloud of swallows before Persian caesarism. He had the consolation, however, of seeing Hermodamas, his first master, take his last breath, and of meeting Parthenis, his mother, the only one who had never doubted that he would return. For every one thought that the adventurous son of the jeweller of Samos was dead. Not for a moment had she doubted the oracle of Apollo. Well she divined that, beneath the Egyptian priest's white robe, her son was preparing himself for some lofty mission. She knew that there would come forth from the temple of Neith-Isis the beneficent master, the light-bearing prophet, of whom she had dreamed in the sacred wood of Delphi, and whom the hierophant of Adonaï had promised her beneath the cedars of Lebanon.

And now a light skiff was bearing away mother and son to a new exile over the azure waves of the Aegean sea. They were fleeing, with all their possessions, from an oppressed and ruined Samos, and were making sail for Greece. Neither the Olympic crowns nor the poet's laurels tempted the son of

Parthenis. His work was greater and more mysterious; it was to rouse to life the slumbering soul of the gods in the sanctuaries, to restore the temple of Apollo to its former might and prestige, and then to found somewhere a school of science and of life whence should come forth, not politicians and sophists, but men and women initiates, true mothers and pure heroes!

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPLE OF DELPHI—THE SCIENCE OF APOLLO — THEORY OF DIVINATION — THE PYTHONESS THEOCLEA

FROM the plain of Phocis the traveller mounts the smiling meadows bordering the banks of the Pleistus to plunge into a winding valley shut in between lofty mountains. At every step the way becomes narrower and the country more sublime and deserted. Finally a circle of rugged mountains, crowned with wild-looking peaks, a veritable storehouse of electricity, over which storms often rage, is reached. Suddenly, far up the sombre gorge, appears the town of Delphi, like an eagle's nest, on a rock surrounded by precipices and dominated by the two peaks of Parnassus. From the distance the bronze Victories are seen sparkling in the light, as well as the brazen horses, the innumerable statues of gold, marshalled along the sacred path and arranged like a guard of heroes and gods round the Doric temple of Phoebus Apollo.

This was the most sacred spot in Greece. Here,

the Pythoness prophesied and the Amphictyons assembled; here, the different Hellenic peoples had built round the sanctuary chapels containing treasured offerings. Here, processions of men, women and children, coming from afar, mounted the sacred path to greet the God of Light. From time immemorial religion had consecrated Delphi to the veneration of the people. Its central situation in Hellas, its rock, sheltered from profane hands and easy to defend, had contributed to this result. The place was calculated to strike the imagination, for a singular quality gave it great prestige. In a cavern behind the temple was a cleft in the rock from which issued a cold, vapoury mist, inducing, it was said, a state of inspiration and ecstasy. Plutarch relates that in bygone times a shepherd, when seated by the side of this cleft, began to prophesy. At first he was looked upon as mad, but when his predictions became realized, people began to investigate. The priests took possession of the spot and consecrated it to the divinity. Hence the institution of the Pythoness, who was seated above the cleft on a tripod. The vapours exhaling from the abyss occasioned convulsions and strange crises, provoking in her that *second sight* noticed in certain somnambulists. Eschylus, whose affirmation is not without weight, for he was the son of a priest of

Eleusis, and an initiate himself, tells us in his *Eumenides*, by the mouth of the Pythoness, that Delphi had first been consecrated to the Earth, then to Themis (Justice), afterwards to Phoebe (the interceding moon), and finally to Apollo, the solar god. In temple symbolism each of these names represents long periods, and embraces centuries of time. The fame of Delphi, however, dates from Apollo. Jupiter, according to the poets, wishing to find the centre of the earth, started two eagles in their flight from east and west, and they met at Delphi. Whence comes this prestige, this world-wide and unchallenged authority which constituted Apollo as the god of Greece *par excellence*, and now makes the glory of his name inexplicable to us?

History is dumb on this important point. Question orators, poets, and philosophers, they will only give you superficial explanations. The real answer to this question remained the secret of the temple. Let us try to fathom it.

In Orphic thought, Dionysos and Apollo were two different revelations of the same divinity. Dionysos represented esoteric truth, the foundation and interior of things, open to initiates alone. He held the mysteries of life, past and future existences, the relations between soul and body, heaven and earth. Apollo personified the same truth applied

to life on earth and social order. The inspirer of poetry, medicine, and laws, he was science by divination, beauty by art, peace among nations by justice, and harmony between soul and body by purification. In a word, to the initiate Dionysos signified nothing less than the divine spirit in evolution in the universe ; and Apollo, the manifestation thereof to mankind on earth. The people had been made to understand this by a legend. The priests had told them that, in the time of Orpheus, Bacchus and Apollo had vied with one another for the tripod of Delphi. Bacchus had willingly given it up to his brother, and withdrawn to one of the peaks of Parnassus, where the Theban women were wont to celebrate his mysteries. In reality the two sons of Jupiter divided between themselves the empire of the world. The one reigned over the mysterious Beyond, the other over the World of the Living.

So that we find in Apollo the solar Logos, the universal Word, the mighty Mediator, the Vishnu of the Hindus, the Mithras of the Persians, and the Horus of the Egyptians. The old ideas of Asiatic esoterism, however, took on, in the legend of Apollo, a plastic beauty and an incisive splendour which made them penetrate the more deeply into human consciousness, like the shafts of the God.

"White-winged serpents springing forth from his golden bow," says Eschylus.

Apollo springs forth from the mighty night at Delos ; all the goddesses greet his birth ; he walks and takes up his bow and lyre, his locks stream in the air and his quiver rattles on his shoulder ; the sea quivers, and the whole island shines with his glory scattered abroad in floods of golden flame. This is the epiphany of divine light, which by its august presence creates order, splendour and harmony, of which poetry is the marvellous echo. The god goes to Delphi and pierces with his arrows a monstrous serpent which was ravaging and laying waste the land, he purifies the country and establishes the temple ; the image of the victory of this divine light over darkness and evil. In ancient religions, the serpent symbolized at once the fatal circle of life and the evil resulting therefrom. And yet from this life, once understood and overcome, springs forth knowledge. Apollo, slayer of the serpent, is the symbol of the initiate who pierces nature by science, tames it by his will, and breaking the Karmic circle of the flesh mounts aloft in spiritual splendour, whilst the broken fragments of human animality lie writhing in the sand. For this reason Apollo is the master of expiation, of the purification of soul and body. Bespattered with

the monster's blood, he performed expiation, purified himself during an eight years exile beneath the bitter, health-giving laurels of the vale of Tempe. Apollo, trainer of men, likes to take up his abode in their midst ; he is pleased to be in towns with the youths and young men, at contests of poetry and the palaestra, though he remains only for a time. In autumn he returns to his own land, the home of the Hyperboreans. This is the mysterious people of luminous and transparent souls who dwell in the eternal dawn of perfect felicity. Here are his true priests, his beloved priestesses. He lives with them in strong, intimate communion, and when he wishes to make mankind a royal gift, he brings back from the country of the Hyperboreans one of those mighty, radiant souls who is born on earth to teach and delight mortals. He himself returns to Delphi every spring, when poems and hymns are sung in his honour. Visible to none but initiates, he comes in dazzling Hyperborean glory, in a chariot drawn by sweetly-singing swans. Again he takes up his abode in the sanctuary, where the Pythoness speaks forth his oracles, and sages and poets listen. Then is heard the song of nightingales, the fountain of Castalia scatters silver spray on every hand, dazzling light and celestial music penetrate the heart of man and reach the very veins of nature.

In this legend of the Hyperboreans may be found much light thrown on the esoteric basis of the Apollo myth. The land of the Hyperboreans is the Beyond, the empyrean of victorious souls, whose astral dawns light up its many-coloured zones. Apollo himself personifies the immaterial and intelligible light of which the sun is merely the physical image, and from which flows down all truth. The wonderful swans which bring him are poets and divine geniuses, messengers of his mighty solar soul, leaving behind them flashes of light and strains of glorious music. Hyperborean Apollo, accordingly, personifies the descent of heaven on to earth, the incarnation of spiritual beauty in flesh and blood, the inflow of transcendent truth by inspiration and divination.

It is now the moment to raise the golden veil of legend and enter the temple itself. How was divination practised therein ? Here we touch upon the secrets of Apollonian science and of the mysteries of Delphi.

In antiquity, a strong tie united divination to the solar cults, and here we have the golden key to all the so-called magic mysteries.

The worship of Aryan humanity from the beginning of civilization was directed towards the sun as the source of light, heat and life. When,

however, the thought of the sages rose from the phenomenon to the cause, behind this sensible fire, this visible light, they formed the concept of an immaterial fire, an intelligible light. They identified the form with the male principle, the creative spirit or intellectual essence of the universe, and the latter with its female principle, its formative soul, its plastic substance. This intuition dates back to time immemorial. The conception I speak of is connected with the most ancient mythologies. It circulates in the Vedic hymns under the form of Agni, the universal fire which penetrates all things. It blossoms forth in the religion of Zoroaster, the esoteric part of which is represented by the cult of Mithras. Mithras is the male fire and Mitra the female light. Zoroaster formally states that the Eternal, by means of the living Word, created the heavenly light, the seed of Ormuzd, the principle of material light and material fire. For the initiate of Mithras the sun is only a rude reflection of this light. In his obscure grotto, whose vault is painted with stars, he invokes the sun of grace, the fire of love, conqueror of evil, reconciler of Ormuzd and Ahriman, purifier and mediator, who dwells in the soul of the holy prophets. In the crypts of Egypt, the initiates seek this same sun under the name of Osiris. When Hermes asks to be allowed to con-

template the origin of things, at first he feels himself plunged into the ethereal waves of a delicious light, in which move all living forms. Then, plunging into the darkness of dense matter, he hears a voice which he recognizes as *the voice of light.* At the same time fire darts forth from the depths, immediately all is light and chaos becomes order. In the *Book of the Dead* of the Egyptians the souls journey painfully towards that light in the barque of Isis. Moses fully adopted this doctrine in Genesis: "Elohim said: Let there be light; and there was light." Now the creation of this light precedes that of the sun and stars. This means that, in the order of principles and cosmogony, intelligible precedes material light. The Greeks, who moulded into human form and dramatized the most abstract ideas, expressed the same doctrine in the myth of Hyperborean Apollo.

Consequently the human mind, by inner contemplation of the universe, from the point of view of the soul and the intelligence, came to conceive of an intelligible light, an imponderable element serving as an intermediary between matter and spirit. It would be easy to show that natural philosophers of modern times insensibly draw somewhere near the same conclusion along an opposite path, *i.e.* by searching for the constitution of matter and seeing

the impossibility of explaining it by itself. Even in the sixteenth century, Paracelsus, whilst studying the chemical combinations and metamorphoses of bodies, went so far as to admit of a universal occult agent by means of which they are brought about. The natural philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who conceived of the universe as being a dead machine, believed in the absolute void of celestial space. Yet when it was discovered that light is not the emission of a radiant matter, but rather the vibration of an imponderable element, one was obliged to admit that the whole of space is filled by an infinitely subtile fluid penetrating all bodies and through which waves of heat and light are transmitted. Thus a return was made to the Greek ideas of natural philosophy and theosophy. Newton, who had spent his whole life in studying the movements of the heavenly bodies, went even further than this. He called this ether *sensorium Dei*, or the brain of God, *i.e.* the organ by which divine thought acts in the infinitely great as well as in the infinitely small. In emitting this idea, which he regarded as necessary to explain the simple rotation of the heavenly bodies, the great natural philosopher had embarked on the open sea of esoteric philosophy. The very ether Newton's thought found in space, Paracelsus had

discovered at the bottom of his alembics, and had named it astral light. Now this imponderable fluid, which is everywhere present, penetrating all things, this subtile but indispensable agent, this light, invisible to our eyes, but which is at the bottom of all phosphorescence and scintillation, has been proved to exist by a German natural philosopher in a series of well-appointed experiments. Reichenbach had noticed that subjects of very sensitive nerve fibre, when placed in a perfectly dark room in front of a magnet, saw at its two ends strong rays of red, yellow, and blue light. Sometimes these rays vibrated with an undulatory movement. He continued his experiments with all kinds of bodies, especially with crystals. Luminous emanations were seen, by sensitive subjects, round all these bodies. Around the heads of men placed in the dark room they saw white rays ; from their fingers issued small flames. In the first portion of their sleep somnambulists sometimes see their magnetizer with these same signs. Pure astral light appears only in a condition of lofty ecstasy, but it is polarized in all bodies, combines with all terrestrial fluids and plays diverse *rôles* in electricity, in terrestrial and animal magnetism.[1] The

[1] Reichenbach called this fluid *odyle*. His work has been translated into English by Gregory : *Researches on Magnetism, Electricity, Heat, Light, Crystallization and Chemical Attraction.*—London, 1850.

interest of Reichenbach's experiments is that they make precise the limits and transition from physical to astral vision, capable of leading on to spiritual vision. They also enable us to obtain a faint glimpse of the infinite subtilties of imponderable matter. Along this path there is nothing to prevent our conceiving it as so fluid, so subtile and penetrating, that it becomes in some way homogeneous with spirit, serving the latter as a perfect garment.

We have just seen that modern natural philosophy, in order to explain the world, has been obliged to recognize an imponderable, universal agent, that it has even proved its presence, and, in this way, without knowing it, has fallen in with the notions of ancient theosophies. Let us now try to define the nature and function of cosmic fluid in accordance with the philosophy of occultism in all ages. On this main principle of cosmogony, Zoroaster is in agreement with Heraclitus, Pythagoras with Saint Paul, the Kabbalists with Paracelsus. Cybele-Maïa reigns everywhere, the mighty soul of the world, the vibrating and plastic substance which the breath of the creative spirit uses at its will. Her oceans of ether serve to cement together all the worlds. She is the great mediator between the invisible and the visible, between spirit and matter,

between the within and the without of the universe. Condensed in enormous masses in the atmosphere beneath the action of the sun, she flashes forth in a thunderbolt. Absorbed by the earth she circulates in magnetic currents. Subtilized in the nervous system of the animal she transmits her will to the limbs, her sensations to the brain. More than that, this subtile fluid forms living organisms similar to material bodies. It serves as substance to the astral body of the soul, a garment of light which the spirit is ever weaving for itself. The fluid becomes transformed, it rarefies or densifies according to the souls it clothes or the worlds it envelops. Not only does it embody spirit and spiritualize matter in its living bosom, it reflects in a perpetual mirage both things and the thoughts and wills of mankind. The strength and duration of these images is in proportion to the intensity of the will producing them. And, in truth, there is no other means of explaining thought suggestion and transmission at a distance, that principle of magic now-a-days acknowledged and recognized by science.[1] Thus in the astral light the past of the worlds trembles in vague images, and the future is there also, with the living

[1] See the Bulletin of the Société de Psychologie Physiologique. M. Charcot, president 1885. See more especially the fine book by M. Ochorowicz, *De la Suggestion Mentale.* Paris, 1887.

souls inevitably destined to descend into flesh. This is the meaning of the veil of Isis and the mantle of Cybele, into which all beings are woven.

It is now seen that the theosophical doctrine of the astral light is identical with the secret doctrine of the solar Word in the religions of Greece and the East. It is also seen how closely allied this doctrine is to that of divination. The astral light is there revealed as the universal medium of the phenomena of vision and of ecstasy, which it explains. It is at once the vehicle which transmits the movements of thought, and the living mirror in which the soul contemplates the images of the material and spiritual world. Once transported into this element, the spirit of the seer leaves corporeal conditions. For him the measure of time and space is changed. In some way he participates in the ubiquity of the universal fluid. For him opaque matter becomes transparent, and the soul, disengaging itself from the body and rising in its own light, penetrates, in a state of ecstasy, into the spiritual world, sees souls clothed in their ethereal bodies and communicates with them. All the initiates of former times had a clear notion of this *second sight*, or direct spiritual vision. Witness Eschylus, who puts into the mouth of the shade of Clytemnestra:

"Look at these wounds, thy spirit can see them; when one is asleep, the spirit possesses a more piercing vision; in broad daylight, the eyes of mortals see but a little way."

Let me add that this theory of clairvoyance and ecstasy is in wonderful agreement with the numerous experiments, scientifically carried out by savants and doctors of modern times, on lucid somnambulists and clairvoyants of every kind.[1] From these contemporary facts I shall endeavour briefly to characterize the successive psychic conditions from simple clairvoyance to cataleptic ecstasy.

The state of clairvoyance, as is seen by thousands

[1] There is a great deal of literature on this subject, very unequal in value, in France, Germany and England, I will here mention two books in which the subject is treated scientifically by men of real worth.

(1) *Letters on Animal Magnetism*, by William Gregory, London, 1850. Gregory was a professor of chemistry at the University of Edinburgh. His book is a profound study of the phenomena of animal magnetism, from suggestion to vision at a distance and lucid clairvoyance, on subjects observed by himself, in accordance with scientific method, and with minute exactness.

(2) *Die mystischen Erscheinungen der menschlichen Natur*, von Maximilian Perty, Leipzig, 1872. Perty is a professor of philosophy and medicine at the University of Berne. His book presents an immense repertory of all such occult phenomena as have historical value. The extremely remarkable chapter on clairvoyance (Schlafwachen), Volume I., contains twenty accounts of female and five of male clairvoyants, related by the doctors who treated the cases. That of Weiner, treated by the author, is most curious. See also the treatises on magnetism by Dupotet and Deleuze, and the very strange book, *Die Seherin von Prévorst*, by Justinus Kerner.

of well-established facts, is a psychic one, differing as greatly from sleep as from a waking condition. The intellectual faculties of the clairvoyant, far from diminishing, increase in marvellous fashion. His memory is more correct, his imagination more active, his intelligence more alert. The main point, in a word, is that we have here developed a new sense, which is no longer corporeal, but rather belongs to the soul. Not only are the thoughts of the magnetizer transmitted to him as in the simple phenomenon of suggestion, which itself is outside the physical plane, but the clairvoyant even reads the thoughts of those present, sees through walls, penetrates hundreds of miles into homes where he has never been, and reads the private life of people he does not know. His eyes are closed, incapable of seeing anything, but his spirit sees farther and better than his open eyes and seems to travel about freely in space.[1] In a word, though clairvoyance may be abnormal from the bodily point of view, it is a normal and superior state from the point of view of the spirit. The consciousness has become deeper, the vision wider. The ego remains the same, but it has passed over to a higher plane, where the vision, freed from the coarse organs of the body, embraces

[1] Numerous examples in Gregory's work: Letters XVI., XVII., and XVIII.

and penetrates a vaster horizon.[1] It is to be noted that certain somnambulists, when submitting to the passes of the magnetizer, feel themselves flooded with increasingly dazzling light, whilst the awaking seems to them an unpleasant return to darkness.

[1] The German philosopher, Schelling, has acknowledged the great importance of somnambulism in the question of the immortality of the soul. He remarks that, in lucid sleep, there is produced an elevation of the soul, and its relative liberation with regard to the body, which does not take place in the normal state. In somnambulists, everything indicates the loftiest consciousness, as though their whole being were met in one luminous focus, uniting together past, present and future. Far from losing all memory of the past, it lies open before them, and even the veil of the future is at times cast aside in a glorious ray of light. If this is possible in earthly life, Schelling inquires, is it not certain that our spiritual personality, which follows us in death, is at this very moment present in us, that it is not born then but simply set free, and shows itself when it is no longer bound by the senses to the outside world? The post-mortem condition is accordingly more real than the earthly one. For in this life, that which is accidental, mingling with the whole, paralyzes in us that which is essential. Schelling calls the future state quite simply, clairvoyance. The spirit liberated from everything accidental in earthly life becomes stronger and more alive; the wicked man becomes worse, the good better.

Quite recently Charles du Prel has advanced the same opinion, supporting it with numerous facts and details in a well-written volume, *Philosophie der Mystik* (1886). He starts from this fact: the consciousness of the ego does not exhaust its object. "Soul and consciousness are not two adequate terms; they do not cover one another as they have not an equal scope. The sphere of the soul far surpasses that of the consciousness." Consequently there is *a latent ego* in us. This latent ego, which manifests itself in sleep and in dreams, is the real ego, supra-terrestrial and transcendent, whose existence precedes our terrestrial ego which is bound to the body. The terrestrial ego is perishable, the transcendent ego is immortal. This is what St. Paul meant when he said, ". . . the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, so that it be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

Suggestion, thought reading, and distant vision are facts which already prove the independent existence of the soul, and transport us above the physical plane of the universe without making us leave it altogether. Clairvoyance, however, has infinite varieties and a scale of different states far wider than that of the waking condition. In proportion as the scale is mounted the phenomena become rarer and more extraordinary. I will mention only the principal stages. *Retrospection* is a vision of past events preserved in the astral light and revived by the sympathy of the seer. *Divination*, properly so called, is a problematical vision of things to come either by introspection of the thoughts of the living which contain future actions in germ, or by the occult influence of superior spirits which unfold the future in living images before the soul of the clairvoyant. In both cases they are projections of thoughts into the astral light. Finally *ecstasy* is defined as a vision of the spiritual world, where good or evil spirits appear to the seer in human form and communicate with him. The soul seems really to be transported out of the body, which life has almost left, and which stiffens into a state of catalepsy resembling death. From what those who have been in a condition of sublime ecstasy tell us, nothing in the universe can express

the beauty and splendour of these visions, or the sentiment of an ineffable fusion with the divine essence which they bring back, a very transport of light and music. The reality of these visions may be doubted. It must, nevertheless, be added that if the soul, in the average state of clairvoyance, has a correct perception of distant places and of absent ones, it is logical to admit that, in its loftiest exaltation, it may have the vision of a higher and an immaterial reality.

In my opinion, it will be the task of the future to restore to the transcendent faculties of the human soul their dignity and social function, by reorganizing them under the control of science and on the basis of a religion which is truly universal, open to all truths. Then science, regenerated by real faith and the spirit of love, will, with open eyes, mount aloft to those spheres in which speculative philosophy gropes about with bandaged eyes. Yes, science will become clear-sighted and redeeming in her mission, just in proportion as the consciousness and love of humanity increase in her. Perhaps it is through "the gate of sleep and dreams," as Homer said, that divine Psyche, banished from our civilized life and weeping in silence beneath her veil, will regain possession of her altars.

Anyhow, the phenomena of clairvoyance, studied

from every aspect by present-day savants and doctors, throw an altogether new light on the *rôle* of divination in antiquity and on a host of apparently supernatural phenomena, with which the annals of every nation and people are filled. Of course, a distinction must be made between legend and history, hallucination and real vision. Still, the experimental psychology of our times teaches us not to reject, in a body, facts which fall within human possibility, but rather to investigate them from the point of view of well-ascertained laws. If clairvoyance is a faculty of the soul, we may no longer simply consign prophets, oracles, and sibyls to the domain of superstition. Divination has really been known and practised in temples of old, with fixed principles and a social and religious end in view. The comparative study of religions and esoteric traditions shows that these principles were the same everywhere, although their application may have varied infinitely. What has discredited the art of divination is that its corruption has given rise to the worst abuses, and that its glorious manifestations are possible only in beings of exceptional purity.

Divination, as practised at Delphi, was founded on the principles we have just set forth ; the inner organization of the temple corresponded thereto.

As in the great temples of Egypt, it consisted of an art and a science. The art consisted in penetrating the far-away past and future by clairvoyance or prophetic ecstasy; the science, in calculating the future in accordance with the laws of universal evolution. Art and science checked one another. All I will say of this science, called genethlialogy by the ancients, and of which the astrology of the middle ages is only an imperfectly understood fragment, is that it took for granted the esoteric encyclopedia as applied to the future of peoples and individuals. Though very useful in showing the direction things were taking, it was always of very doubtful application. Only the very loftiest minds knew how to use it. Pythagoras had thoroughly mastered it in Egypt, but in Greece it was practised with a less thorough or clear understanding. On the other hand, clairvoyance and prophecy had made considerable progress.

It is well known that this art was practised in Delphi through the agency of women, both young and old. They were called Pythonesses, and played the passive *rôle* of clairvoyant somnambulists. Their oracles, often obscure, were interpreted, translated, and arranged by the priests in accordance with their own lights. Modern historians have seen in the institution of Delphi scarcely anything

more than the exploitation of superstition by intelligent charlatans. Besides the assent, however, given by the whole of philosophic antiquity to the Delphic science of divination, several oracles related by Herodotus, such as those regarding Croesus and the battle of Salamis, speak in its favour. Doubtless their art had its beginning, its condition of prosperity, and its decay. Charlatanism and corruption exercised their demoralising influence in the end, as we see in the case of king Cleomenes, who bribed the high priestess of Delphi to deprive Demaratus of his throne. Plutarch wrote a treatise inquiring into the reasons for the decline and extinction of the oracles ; this degeneracy was felt to be a misfortune throughout all classes of antiquity. At first, divination was practised with a degree of religious sincerity and scientific thoroughness which raised it to the height of a real ministration. On the pediment of the temple could be read the inscription : "Know thyself," and another one above the entrance door : "Let no one enter here with impure hands." These words explained to all comers that earthly passions, falsehood and hypocrisy were not to pass the threshold of the sanctuary, that within, in awe-inspiring solemnity, reigned divine Truth.

Pythagoras reached Delphi only after having

visited all the temples of Greece. He had stayed with Epimenides in the sanctuary of Idaean Jupiter; he had been present at the Olympic games, and presided over the mysteries of Eleusis, where the hierophant had given up his place to him. Everywhere had he been received as a master, and now he was expected at Delphi. Here the art of divination was in a languishing condition, and Pythagoras wished to restore its former prestige and might. Accordingly he went there not so much to consult Apollo as to enlighten his interpreters and revive their enthusiasm and energy. Through them his influence would mould the soul of Greece and prepare a future for the land.

Fortunately he found in the temple a marvellous instrument reserved for him, to all appearance, by the hand of Providence.

Young Theoclea belonged to the college of the priestesses of Apollo. She sprang from one of those families in which the priestly dignity is hereditary. Her childhood had been fed on the mighty impressions imparted by the sanctuary, the ceremonies, paeans, and *fêtes* of Pythian and Hyperborean Apollo. Evidently she was one of those maidens born with an instinctive abhorrence for the things which attracted others. They love not Ceres and fear Venus, for the heavy atmosphere of earth

troubles them, and the vague glimpse they have obtained of physical love seems to them the rape of the soul, the pollution of their undefiled, virginal being. On the other hand, they are strangely sensitive to mysterious currents, to astral influences. When the moon was shedding her soft beams on the sombre groves near the fountain of Castalia, Theoclea would see white forms gliding by. She heard voices in open daylight. On exposing herself to the rays of the rising sun, their vibration threw her into a kind of ecstasy, during which she heard the singing of invisible choirs. At the same time she was quite indifferent to popular superstition and idolatry; a feeling of horror overcame her at the sacrifices of animals. She spoke to no one regarding the apparitions which disturbed her sleep, feeling with clairvoyant instinct that the priests of Apollo were not in possession of that supreme light she needed. The latter, however, had fixed on her with the object of persuading her to become Pythoness. She felt herself attracted by a higher world to which she had not the key. What were these gods who manifested themselves to her in vibrations which troubled her being, and to whom she owed her inspiration? This she would know before giving herself up to them, for great souls need to see clearly even in abandoning themselves to divine powers.

With what a deep thrill, with how mysterious a presentiment the soul of Theoclea must have been stirred when she saw Pythagoras for the first time, and heard his eloquent voice resound among the columns of the sanctuary of Apollo! She felt the presence of the initiator for whom she was waiting, she recognized her master. She wished to know; knowledge would come by him; he would make this inner world speak, this world she bore within herself! He, on his side, must have recognized in her, with sure and penetrating glance, the living, thrilling soul he was seeking, to become the interpreter of his thoughts in the temple and instil therein a new spirit. No sooner had their eyes met, their lips spoken, than an invisible chain bound the sage of Samos to the young priestess, who listened to him without a word, drinking in his utterances with eager, attentive eyes. Some one has said that a profound vibration enables poet and lyre to recognize one another as they approach. Thus did Pythagoras and Theoclea recognize one another.

At sunrise, Pythagoras had long conversations with the priests of Apollo, ordained saints and prophets. He requested that the young priestess should be received by them, so that he might initiate her into his secret teaching and prepare her for her mission. Accordingly she was permitted to follow the lessons given daily in the sanctuary by

the master. Pythagoras was now in the prime of life. He wore a white robe, girdled in Egyptian fashion; a purple band was wrapped round his majestic brow. When he spoke, his grave, mild eyes were fastened on his interlocutor, enveloping him in a warm, tender light. The very atmosphere seemed to become lighter and electric with intelligence.

The conversations of the sage of Samos with the highest representatives of the Greek religion were of the utmost importance. It was not merely a question of divination and inspiration; the future of Greece and the destiny of the whole world were at stake. The knowledge, titles, and powers he had acquired in the temples of Memphis and Babylon gave him the greatest authority and influence. To those who inspired Greece he had the right to speak as a superior and a guide. This he did with all the eloquence of his genius and the enthusiasm of his mission. To enlighten their minds, he began by telling them of his youthful days, his struggles and Egyptian initiation. He spoke to them of Egypt, the mother of Greece, old as the world itself, immovable as a mummy, covered with hieroglyphs in the recesses of its pyramids, though possessing in its tombs the secrets of peoples, languages, and religions. Before their eyes he unfolded the mysteries of great Isis, goddess of earth and heaven,

mother of gods and men ; then, relating his trials and ordeals, he plunged them, with himself, into the light of Osiris. Afterwards came the turn of Babylon, of the Chaldaean magi, their occult sciences, and those deep solid temples where they call forth the living fire, the abode of demons and gods.

As she listened to Pythagoras, Theoclea passed through wonderful sensations. All he said was branded in letters of fire in her mind. These things appeared to her both marvellous and yet well known. Instead of hearing something new she seemed to be recalling what she had already learned. The master's words set her turning over the pages of the universe like those of a book. No longer did she see the gods in their human image, but in their essence, forming things and spirits. With them she flowed in space, rising and falling. At times there came the illusion that she no longer felt the limits of her body, and was fading away into infinity. Thus her imagination entered by degrees into the invisible world, and the former traces she found of it in her own soul told her that this was the true and only reality ; the other was only apparent. She felt that her inner eyes would soon open and read the truth.

From these heights the master suddenly brought her back to earth by relating the misfortunes of

Egypt. After developing the greatness of Egyptian science, he showed how it was dying away under the Persian invasion. He depicted the horrible atrocities committed by Cambyses, the pillaged temples, the sacred books committed to the flames, the priests of Osiris killed or dispersed, the monster of Persian despotism collecting beneath his iron hand all the old barbaric tribes of Asia, the half-savage nomad races of India, and the centre of the continent, awaiting only a favourable opportunity to fall upon Europe. Yes, this ever-increasing cyclone must burst upon Greece as certainly as the thunderbolt, collecting in the sky, must flash forth from the cloud. Was divided Greece prepared to resist this terrible attack? She did not even suspect it. Nations cannot avoid their destinies, which the gods precipitate upon them, unless they are ever watchful. Had not Egypt, that wise nation of Hermes, crumbled to ruin after six thousand years of prosperity? Greece, alas! and beautiful Ionia would pass away even sooner! A time would come when the solar god would abandon this temple, when barbarian tribes would overthrow its very walls, and shepherds lead their flocks to pasture on the ruins of Delphi.

Before such sinister prophecies the countenance of Theoclea became transformed, assuming a terri-

fied expression. She sank to the ground, and, with arms clasped round a column and eyes fixed as though plunged in thought, she resembled the genius of Grief weeping over the tomb of Greece.

"Those are secrets," continued Pythagoras, "which must be buried in the depths of the temples. The initiate attracts death or repels it at his pleasure. By forming the magic chain of wills, initiates in this way prolong the life of nations. It is for you to postpone the fatal hour, to cause Greece to shine in splendour and beam forth with the word of Apollo. Nations and peoples are what their gods make them, but the gods reveal themselves only to such as appeal to them. What is Apollo? The word of the one God manifesting himself eternally in the world. Truth is the soul of God, his body is the light. Only seers, sages, and prophets behold it; men see only its shadow. Legions of glorified spirits, whom we call heroes and demi-gods, inhabit this light in spheres beyond number. This is the real body of Apollo, the sun of initiates; without his rays nothing great is done on earth. As the magnet attracts iron, so by our thoughts, our prayers, and actions do we attract divine inspiration. It is for you to hand over to Greece the word of Apollo, and Greece shall be resplendent with immortal light!"

With such language Pythagoras succeeded in restoring to the priests of Delphi the consciousness of their mission. Theoclea drank in every word with silent, concentrated passion. She was visibly becoming transformed beneath the thought and will of the master as by a slow incantation. Standing in the midst of the astonished elders, she untied her raven-black locks and thrust them back from her head as though she felt flames of fire playing in and about them. Her eyes, transfigured and wide open, seemed to behold the solar and planetary gods in their radiant, glowing orbs.

One day she fell into a deep, lucid sleep. The five prophets surrounded her, but she remained insensible alike to their voice and touch. Pythagoras drew near and said: "Rise and go where my thought sends thee. For now thou art the Pythoness!"

On hearing the master's voice, a long vibrating thrill ran through the whole of her body and she rose to her feet. Her eyes were closed, but she saw from within.

"Where art thou?" asked Pythagoras.

"I am ascending——ascending all the time."

"And now?"

"I am bathing in the light of Orpheus."

"What seest thou in the future?"

"Great wars——men of might—— Apollo returns to dwell in his sanctuary, and I shall be his voice——! But thou, his messenger, thou art about to leave me, alas! thou wilt bear the torch of his light into Italy."

Long did the seer speak, with closed eyes, in musical, panting, rhythmic voice; then suddenly, with a sob, she fell to the ground like one dead.

Thus did Pythagoras pour a pure, undefiled stream of knowledge into Theoclea's breast, tuning her like a lyre for divine inspiration. Once exalted to these heights she became his torch, thanks to which he was able to sound his own destiny, see into the possible future, and direct his path along the strandless zones of the invisible. Such a striking counter-verification of the truths he taught filled the priests with admiration, aroused their courage and revived their faith. The temple now possessed an inspired Pythoness, and priests initiated into the divine sciences and arts; Delphi could once again become a centre of life and action.

Pythagoras remained there for a whole year. It was only after imparting to the priests all the secrets of his doctrine, and preparing Theoclea for his ministry, that he took his departure for Greater Greece.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER AND THE DOCTRINE

THE town of Croton was situated at the extremity of the Gulf of Tarentum, near the Lacinian promontory, in front of the open sea. Like Sybaris, it was one of the most flourishing cities in Southern Italy. It was famed for its Doric constitution, its victorious athletes at the Olympian games, and its doctors, rivals of the Asclepiads. The Sybarites owe their immortality to their luxury and effeminacy. The inhabitants of Croton would perhaps be forgotten, despite their virtues, had theirs not been the glory of offering a home to the great school of esoteric philosophy, known under the name of the Pythagorean sect, which may be looked upon as the mother of the school of Plato and the ancestor of all idealist schools. However noble the descendants, their ancestors greatly surpassed them. The school of Plato issues from an incomplete tradition, whereas the Stoic school has already lost the true tradition. Other systems of ancient and modern philosophy are more or less fortunate speculations,

whilst the teaching of Pythagoras was based on experimental science and accompanied by a complete organization of life.

The secrets of the master's order and thought are now, like the ruins of the ancient town, buried deep underground. All the same we will try to resurrect them, for thus we shall have an opportunity of penetrating to the very heart of the theosophic doctrine, the arcanum of religions and philosophies, and raising a corner of the veil of Isis to the light of Greek genius.

Several reasons influenced Pythagoras in choosing this Dorian colony as a centre of action. His aim was not merely to teach the esoteric doctrine to a circle of chosen disciples, but also to apply its principles to the education of youth and to the life of the state. This plan comprised the foundation of an institution for laic initiation, with the object of finally transforming the political organization of the cities by degrees into the image of that philosophic and religious ideal. Certainly none of the republics of Hellas or of Peloponnesus would have tolerated this innovation. The philosopher would have been accused of conspiring against the State. The Greek towns of the Gulf of Tarentum, which were less preyed upon by demagogues, were more liberal-minded. Pythagoras made no mistake in

expecting to find a favourable reception for his reforms at the hands of the Croton senate. His designs went also beyond Greece. Foreseeing the evolution of ideas, he was prepared for the fall of Hellenism, and was thinking of sowing in the human mind the principles of a scientific religion. By founding his school in the Gulf of Tarentum, he was spreading esoteric ideas throughout Italy, and keeping in the precious vase of his doctrine the purified essence of Oriental wisdom for the peoples of the West.

On coming to Croton, which was at the time inclined to adopt the voluptuous life of its neighbour Sybaris, Pythagoras produced a veritable revolution. Porphyry and Iamblichus have depicted the commencement of his life there as being rather that of a magician than of a philosopher. Assembling the youth in the Temple of Apollo, he succeeded by his eloquence in tearing them away from a life of debauchery. Summoning the women to the Temple of Juno, he persuaded them to bring their golden robes and ornaments as trophies to celebrate the defeat of vanity and luxury. He threw a veil of grace over the austerity of his teachings, a communicating flame flashed forth from his words of wisdom. His beautiful face and noble bearing, the charm of his countenance and of his voice com-

pletely captivated them. The women compared him to Jupiter, the young men to Hyperborean Apollo. He captivated and seduced the crowds which, whilst listening to him, were greatly astonished to find themselves enamoured of truth and virtue.

The senate of Croton, or *the Council of the Thousand,* grew uneasy at the influence he was obtaining. They summoned Pythagoras to explain his conduct, and to state the means he was making use of to master the minds of the citizens. This gave him an opportunity to develop his ideas on education, and demonstrate that, far from threatening with ruin the Doric constitution of Croton, they only strengthened it the more. When he had won over to his side the wealthiest of the citizens and the majority of the senate, he proposed that they should found an institute for himself and his disciples. This brotherhood of laic initiates should live in common in a building constructed for the purpose, though without separating themselves from civil life. Those of them who already deserved the name of master, might teach physical, psychic and religious sciences. Young men should be admitted to the lessons of the masters and to the different grades of initiation according to their intelligence or earnestness in study, under the control of the

head of the order. At the beginning, they must submit to the rules of the common life and spend the whole day in the institute, under the supervision of the masters. Those who should wish to enter the order formally were to give up their fortune to a trustee, with permission to enter again into possession of it whenever they pleased. In the institute there would be a section for women, along with a parallel initiation, though different and more adapted to the duties of their sex.

This plan was enthusiastically adopted by the senate of Croton, and, after a few years, near the entrance to the town there rose a building surrounded by vast porticoes and beautiful gardens. The inhabitants of Croton called it the Temple of the Muses, and, to tell the truth, in the centre of the buildings, near the humble dwelling of the master, stood a temple dedicated to these divinities.

Thus sprang into being the Pythagorean institute, which became at one and the same time a college of education, a science academy, and a small model city under the control of a great initiate. It is by theory and practice, by science and art combined, that slow progress was made to that science of sciences, that magical harmony of soul and intellect with the universe which Pythagoreans looked upon as the arcanum of philosophy

and religion. The Pythagorean school is of supreme interest for us, inasmuch as it was a most remarkable attempt at laic initiation. Being an anticipated synthesis of Hellenism and Christianity, it grafted the fruit of science on the tree of life, it acquired the knowledge of that inner, that living realization, of truth, which a profound faith alone can give. It was an ephemeral realization, though one of the greatest importance, instinct with the fruitfulness of example.

To form some idea of it, let us enter the Pythagorean institute along with the novice and follow his initiation step by step.

THE TEST

The white dwelling of the brother initiates was situated on a hill, surrounded by olive and cypress trees. On mounting from below, the porticoes, gardens, and gymnasium could distinctly be seen. The Temple of the Muses, with its circular colonnade of airy elegance, towered above the two wings of the building. The terrace of the outer gardens overlooked the town with its Prytaneum, its harbour and meeting-place. Away in the distance stretched the gulf, between sharp rugged parts of the coast

as though in a cup of agate, whilst the Ionian sea shut in the horizon with its line of azure blue. At times one might see women clad in divers-coloured costumes issue on the left and make their way in long files down to the sea, along the alley of cypresses. They were going to worship at the Temple of Ceres. And on the right also, men might often be seen mounting in white robes to the Temple of Apollo. It was not the least attraction to the inquiring imagination of youth to think that the school of the initiates was placed under the protection of these two divinities, one of whom, the Mighty Goddess, held the profound mysteries of Woman and of Earth, whilst the other, the Solar God, revealed those of Man and of Heaven.

So we find this little city of the elect smiling down upon the populous town beneath. The noble instincts of youth were attracted by its peaceful serenity, though nothing was seen of what was taking place within, and it was generally known that admittance was not easily obtained. The gardens connected with the institute of Pythagoras were separated from the outside by nothing but a simple green hedge, and the entrance gate remained open all day long. A statue of Hermes, however, might be seen there, and on its pedestal were the words: *Eskato Bebeloi;* No entrance for the profane! This

commandment of the mysteries was universally respected.

Pythagoras was very stern in admitting novices, saying, "that not every kind of wood was fit for making a Mercury." The young men who wished to enter the association were obliged to undergo a period of test and trial. On being introduced by their parents or by one of the masters, they were first of all permitted to enter the Pythagorean gymnasium in which the novices played the games appropriate to their age. The young man at once noticed that this gymnasium was unlike that in the town. There were no violent cries or noisy groups, no ridiculous boasting or vain display of strength by athletes in embryo, challenging one another and exhibiting their muscles; but rather groups of courteous and distinguished-looking young men, walking in couples beneath the porticoes or playing in the arena. They invited him with graceful simplicity to join in their conversation as though he were one of them, without greeting him with a suspicious glance or jeering smile. In the arena they were racing, throwing quoits and javelins, and engaging in mock fights under the form of Doric dances. Pythagoras had, however, strictly abolished wrestling, saying that it was superfluous and even dangerous to develop pride and hatred by

strength and agility ; that men intended to practise the virtues of friendship ought not to begin by flinging one another on the ground and rolling in the sand like wild beasts ; that a real hero could fight with great courage though without fury ; that hatred makes us inferior to any opponent whoever he be. The new-comer heard these maxims from the lips of the masters repeated by the novices, who were quite proud to impart their precocious wisdom. At the same time they encouraged him to state his own opinions and freely contradict them. Emboldened by such advances, the ingenuous aspirant quickly showed forth his real nature. Pleased at being listened to and admired, he would speak and dilate at his ease. Meanwhile the masters closely watched him without ever uttering the slightest word of reprimand. Pythagoras would come up unexpectedly and study his gestures and words. He paid special attention to the gait and the laugh of young men. Laughter, he said, is an infallible index to character, no amount of dissimulation can render agreeable the laugh of an evil-disposed man. He had also made such a profound study of the human face that he could read therein the very depths of the soul.[1]

Such minute observation enabled the master to

[1] Origen states that Pythagoras was the inventor of physiognomy.

form a precise idea regarding his future disciples. A few months afterwards came decisive tests in imitation of Egyptian initiation, though greatly modified and adapted to the Greek nature, whose sensitiveness had not submitted to the mortal terrors of the crypts of Memphis and Thebes. The Pythagorean aspirant was made to spend the night in a cavern, in the outskirts of the town, alleged to be haunted by various apparitions and monsters. Those who had not sufficient strength to endure the terrible impressions of solitude and night, who refused to enter or made their escape before the morning, were deemed too weak for initiation and rejected.

The moral test was a more serious one. Suddenly, without the least preparation, the would-be disciple would one fine morning find himself imprisoned in an empty, dismal-looking cell. A slate was given him, and he was coldly ordered to discover the meaning of one of the Pythagorean symbols, as, for instance: What is the signification of the triangle inscribed in a circle? or: Why is the dodecahedron, confined within the sphere, the symbol of the universe? He spent a dozen hours in his cell with his slate and the problem, and no other companion than a vase of water and a piece of dry bread. Then he was taken into a room to face the assembled

novices. Under these circumstances the order had been passed round that they should ridicule without pity the wretched youth, who, hungry and sullen, stood before them like a culprit. "So this is the new philosopher," they would say. "How inspired he looks! He will now tell us of his meditations. Do not conceal from us what you have discovered. You will in the same way go through all the symbols in turn. A month of this *régime* and you will have become a great sage!"

At this point the master would attentively observe the young man's attitude and expression. Irritated by his fast, overwhelmed with these sarcastic words, and humiliated at not being able to solve an incomprehensible problem, no small effort was needed to control himself. Some would weep with rage, others gave sarcastic replies, whilst others again, unable to control themselves, dashed their slate madly to the ground and burst out in imprecations against school, master, and disciples alike. Then Pythagoras came forward and calmly said that, as they had failed in the test of self-respect, they were begged not to return to a school of which they had so bad an opinion, in which friendship and respect for the masters should be the most elementary of virtues. The rejected candidate would shamefacedly retire and sometimes become a

redoubtable enemy of the order, like the well-known Cylon who, later on, excited the people against the Pythagoreans and brought about their downfall. On the other hand, those who bore everything with firmness, and gave just and witty replies to the provoking words they listened to, declaring they were ready to repeat the test a hundred times if only they could attain to the least degree of wisdom, were solemnly welcomed into the novitiate and received the enthusiastic congratulations of their new companions.

FIRST DEGREE—PREPARATION

The novitiate and the Pythagorean life

Then only began the novitiate called the preparation (*paraskeia*), which lasted at least two years, and might be prolonged to five. The novices, or listeners (*akousikoi*), during the lessons they received, were subjected to the rule of absolute silence. They had no right either to offer any objection to their masters or to discuss the teaching they were absorbing. This latter they were to receive with respect and to meditate upon at length. To impress this rule in the mind of the new listener, he was shown the statue of a woman, enveloped in

a long veil, her fingers raised to her mouth, *The Muse of Silence.*

Pythagoras did not regard youth as being capable of understanding the origin and the end of things. He thought that exercising them in logic and reasoning, before inculcating in them the meaning of truth, made them ignorant and assuming sophists. His idea was to develop in his pupils, before everything else, intuition, that primordial and superior faculty of mankind. To do this, he did not teach anything mysterious or difficult. Starting from natural sentiments, the first duties of man on entering life, he showed their relations with the laws of the universe. Whilst first of all inculcating in youth parental love, he magnified this sentiment by assimilating the idea of father to that of God, the mighty creator of the universe. "Nothing is more venerable," he said, "than the quality of fatherhood. Homer named Jupiter king of the gods, but in order to show forth all his greatness, he called him the Father of gods and men." He compared the mother to generous and beneficent Nature ; as heavenly Cybele produces the stars and Demeter gives birth to the fruits and flowers of the earth, so does the mother feed the child with every joy. Accordingly the son ought to honour in his father and mother the representatives, the earthly

images, of these mighty divinities. He also showed that the love of fatherland comes from the affection one feels in childhood for one's mother. Parents are given to us, not by chance, as is commonly believed, but in accordance with a previous, a superior order, called Fortune or Necessity. To honour them is *an obligation;* but a friend *must be chosen.* The novices were invited to form themselves into couples, according to their several affinities. The younger should seek in the elder the virtues he is himself aiming after, and the two companions should encourage each other towards a better life. "A friend is another self; he must be honoured as a god," said the master. Though the Pythagorean rules imposed on the "listener" novice absolute submission to his masters, it gave him full liberty in enjoying the charms of friendship, it even made of this latter the stimulus of every virtue, the poetry of life, the path leading to the ideal.

Individual energy was thus roused, morality became poetical and instinct with life, a rule lovingly accepted ceased to be a constraint, it became the very affirmation of an individuality. It was the wish of Pythagoras that obedience should be an assent and an approval. Besides this, the moral prepared the way for the philosophical teaching.

The relations set up between social duties and the harmonies of the Kosmos gave one a glimpse into the law of universal agreement and analogy. In this law dwells the principle of the Mysteries, of occult teaching and of the whole of philosophy. The mind of the pupil thus grew accustomed to find the impress of an invisible order on visible realities. General maxims and concise prescriptions opened out perspectives of this superior world. Morning and evening the *Golden Verses* rang in the pupil's ear :

> " First worship the immortal Gods, as they are established and ordained by the Law.
> Reverence the Oath, and next the Heroes, full of goodness and light."

In commenting on this maxim, it was shown that the gods, though apparently different, were really the same among all people, since they corresponded with the same intellectual and soul forces active throughout the universe. The sage could consequently honour the gods of his own country, whilst forming of their very essence a different idea from that generally held. Tolerance for every cult; unity of people in one humanity ; unity of religions in esoteric science : these new ideas became vaguely outlined in the mind of the novice like glorious

divinities one might catch a glimpse of in the splendour of the setting sun. And the golden lyre continued its lofty teachings:

> "Honour likewise the terrestrial Dæmons by rendering them the worship lawfully due to them."

Besides these lines the novice saw beaming as through a veil the divine Psyche, the human soul. The heavenly pathway shone like a stream of light, for in the worship of heroes and demi-gods, the initiate saw the doctrine of the future life and the mystery of universal evolution. This secret was not revealed to the novice, but he was made ready for its understanding by being told of a hierarchy of beings superior to humanity, its guides and protectors, called heroes and demi-gods. It was also stated that they served as intermediaries between man and divinity, that by their help he might step by step succeed in drawing nearer to them if he practised heroic and divine virtues. "But how could communication be obtained with these invisible spirits? Whence comes the soul? Whither does it proceed? Wherefore the sombre mystery of death?" The novice dared not formulate these questions in words, but his looks revealed them, and the only reply his masters gave him was to

point to the strugglers on earth, the statues in the temple, and the glorified souls in heaven, "in the fiery citadel of the god" to which Hercules had attained.

At the foundation of the ancient mysteries, all the gods were included in the only supreme God. This revelation, including all its consequences, became the key of the Kosmos. This was the reason it was entirely reserved for initiation, properly so called. The novice knew nothing of this, he was only permitted to catch a faint glimpse of this truth from what he was told of the powers of Music and Number. "Numbers," said the master, "contain the secret of things, and God is universal harmony." The seven sacred modes, built up on the seven notes of the heptachord, correspond to the seven colours of light, to the seven planets, and to the seven modes of existence reproduced in all the spheres of material and spiritual life from the smallest to the greatest. The melodies of these modes when skilfully fused should tune the soul and make it sufficiently harmonious to vibrate in accord with the accents of truth.

With this purification of the soul corresponded of necessity that of the body, which was obtained by means of hygiene and strict moral discipline. The first duty of initiation was to overcome one's

passions. He who has not harmonized his own being cannot reflect divine harmony. And yet the ideal of the Pythagorean life contained nothing of asceticism in it, for marriage was looked upon as sacred. Chastity, however, was recommended to the novices, and moderation to the initiates, as being a source of strength and perfection: "Only yield to voluptuousness when you consent to be less than yourself," said the master. He added that voluptuousness exists only in itself, comparing it "to the song of the Sirens who disappear when one approaches them, to find in their place nothing but broken bones and bleeding flesh on a wave-beaten rock, whilst true joy is like the concert of the Muses, leaving celestial harmony behind in the soul." Pythagoras believed in the virtues of the woman initiate, he greatly mistrusted the untrained woman. On a disciple asking him when he might be permitted to approach a woman, he replied in ironical accents: "When you are tired of your peace of mind."

The Pythagorean day was spent in the following manner. As soon as the sun's glorious orb rose above the blue waves of the Ionian sea, gilding the columns of the Temple of the Muses, above the abode of the initiates, the young Pythagoreans chanted a hymn to Apollo, the while performing a

sacred, dignified dance. After the obligatory ablutions, they proceeded in silence to the temple. Each awakening is a resurrection possessed of its flower of innocence. The soul must retire within itself at the beginning of the day and remain unsullied for the morning lesson. In the sacred wood, groups were formed round the master or his interpreters, and the lesson was given beneath the fragrance of the mighty trees or the shade of the porticoes. At noon, prayer was offered to the heroes and benevolent spirits. Esoteric tradition affirmed that good spirits preferred to approach the earth with the radiance of the sun, whilst evil spirits haunted the shades and filled the air when night came on. The frugal midday meal generally consisted of bread, honey, and olives. The afternoon was devoted to gymnastic exercises, then to study and meditation, afterwards to some mental work on the morning's lesson. After the sun had set, prayer was offered in common, a hymn sung to the gods of the Kosmos, to heavenly Jupiter, to Minerva, Providence, and to Diana, guardian of the dead. Meanwhile storax, manna, or incense were burning on the altar in the open air, and the hymn, mingling with the perfume, rose gently in the twilight, whilst the early stars pierced the pale azure sky. The day ended with the evening meal, after which the

youngest member read aloud, comments being made thereon by the eldest.

Thus the day passed like a limpid spring, clear as a cloudless morn. The year was divided according to the great astronomical events. Thus the return of Hyperborean Apollo and the celebration of the Mysteries of Ceres saw novices and initiates of every degree, both men and women, assembled together. Young girls played on ivory lyres, married women, in purple and saffron-coloured cloaks, performed alternate choruses, accompanied by songs, along with the harmonious movements of strophe and antistrophe, imitated later on in tragedy. In the midst of these great *fêtes*, at which a divine presence was manifested in grace of form and movement and the penetrating melody of the choruses, the novice was conscious of a kind of presentiment of occult forces, the all-powerful laws of the animated universe, the deep, transparent heavens. Marriages and funeral rites were of a more intimate, but none the less solemn, character. There was one original ceremony, calculated to strike the imagination. When a novice, of his own accord, left the institute to take up once more the ordinary every-day life, or when a disciple had betrayed a secret of the doctrine, an occurrence which happened only once, the initiates raised a tomb for him

in the consecrated precincts, as though he were dead. The master said: "He is more dead than the dead, for he has returned to an evil life; his body appears among men, but his soul is dead; let us weep for it!" This tomb erected to a living man, persecuted him like his own phantom, like an evil omen.

SECOND DEGREE—PURIFICATION[1]

Numbers—Theogony

It was a happy day, "a day of gold," as the ancients said, when Pythagoras received the novice into his dwelling and solemnly welcomed him into the rank of his disciples. First of all he entered into direct and connected relations with the master; he came into the inner court of his dwelling reserved for his faithful followers. Hence the name of *esoteric* (those from within) in opposition to that of *exoteric* (those from without). The real initiation now began.

This revelation consisted of a complete, rational exposition of occult doctrine, from its principles as contained in the mysterious science of numbers to the final consequences of universal evolution, the destiny and end of divine Psyche, the human soul.

[1] *Katharsis* in Greek.

This science of numbers was known under different names in the temples of Egypt and Asia. As it afforded a key to the whole doctrine, it was carefully concealed from the people. The figures and letters, the geometric forms and human representations, which served as signs in this algebra of the occult world, were understood by none but the initiate. He divulged their meaning to the adepts only after receiving from them the oath of silence. Pythagoras formulated this science in a book he wrote with his own hand, called *hieros logos* (the sacred word). This book has not come down to us, but we are acquainted with its principles from the subsequent writings of the Pythagoreans, Philolaus, Archytas, and Hierocles, the dialogues of Plato, and the treatises of Porphyry and Iamblichus. The reason they have remained a dead letter for modern philosophers is that their meaning and bearing can only be understood by comparison with all the esoteric doctrines of the East.

Pythagoras called his disciples mathematicians, because his higher teaching began by the doctrine of numbers. These sacred mathematics, however, or science of principles, were both more transcendent and more living than profane mathematics, which alone are known to our savants and philosophers. In them Number was not regarded as an abstract

quantity but as the intrinsic and active virtue of the supreme One, of God the source of universal harmony. The science of *numbers* was that of the living forces, *of the divine faculties* in action in the universe and in man, in the macrocosm and in the microcosm.——In examining them, distinguishing and explaining their working, Pythagoras was evolving nothing less than a rational theogony or theology. In a real theology we should look for the principles of every science ; it will be the science of God only if it shows the unity and concatenation of the sciences of nature. It deserves its name only on condition it constitutes the organ and the synthesis of all the rest. Now this is exactly the part played in the Egyptian temples by the science of the holy Word, formulated and made exact by Pythagoras under the name of the science of numbers. It claimed to supply the key of being, of science, and of life. The adept, under the guidance of his master, had to begin by contemplating its principles in the light of his own intelligence, before following its many applications in the concentric immensity of the spheres of evolution.

A modern poet has had a presentiment of this truth in causing Faust to descend to *the Mothers* to restore life to the phantom of Helen. Faust seizes the magic key, the earth melts away beneath him,

he becomes unconscious and plunges into the void of space. Finally he reaches the Mothers who keep watch over the first forms of the mighty All, and cause beings to issue from the mould of the archetypes. These Mothers are the Numbers of Pythagoras, the divine forces of the world. The poet has communicated to us the thrill of his own thought before this plunge into the abyss of the Unfathomable. For the ancient initiate, in whom the direct view of intelligence was gradually aroused as though it were a new sense, this inner revelation seemed rather an ascent into the incandescent sun of Truth, whence he contemplated in the fulness of light the forms and beings thrown out in the whirl of lives by a vertiginous irradiation.

He did not reach in a single day that inner possession of truth in which man realizes universal life by the concentration of his faculties. Years of training were needed, and that agreement, so difficult to effect, of the intelligence and the will. Before using the creative word—and how few succeed in this!—one must spell out the sacred logos, letter by letter, syllable by syllable.

Pythagoras was in the habit of giving this teaching in the Temple of the Muses. This temple had been built by the magistrates of Croton at his express request and according to his plans, in an

enclosed garden near his abode. The disciples of the second degree came there alone with the master. Inside this circular temple were the marble statues of the nine Muses. Standing in the centre the solemn and mysterious Hestia, covered with a veil, kept watch. Her left hand afforded protection to the fire on the hearth, whilst with her right she pointed to heaven. Both Greeks and Romans looked upon Hestia, or Vesta, as the guardian of the divine principle present in all things. The soul of sacred fire, she has her altar in the temple of Delphi, at the Prytaneum of Athens, as well as on the humblest hearth. In the sanctuary of Pythagoras she symbolized divine and central Science, or Theogony. In a circle around her, the esoteric Muses bore, in addition to their traditional and mythological names, that of the occult sciences and sacred arts of which they had the guardianship. *Urania* presided over astrology and astronomy ; *Polyhymnia* over the science of souls in the other life and the art of divination ; *Melpomene*, with her tragic mask, over the science of life and death, of transformations and re-births. These three superior Muses constituted together the cosmogony, or heavenly physics. *Calliope*, *Clio*, and *Euterpe* presided over the science of man, or psychology, with its corresponding arts, medicine, magic, and moral philosophy.

The last group, *Terpsichore*, *Erato*, and *Thalia*, embraced terrestrial physics, the science of elements, stones, plants, and animals.

Thus at a glance the organism of the sciences, following that of the universe, appeared to the disciple in the living circle of the Muses, illumined by the divine flame.

After leading his disciples into this small sanctuary, Pythagoras opened the book of the Word, and began his esoteric teaching.

"These Muses," he said, "are only the earthly images of the divine powers whose immaterial and sublime beauty you will contemplate each one in himself. Just as they have their eyes fixed upon the fire of Hestia, from which they spring and which gives them movement, rhythm, and melody —so you must plunge into the central fire of the universe, into the divine spirit, to mingle with it in its visible manifestations." Then with bold, powerful hand, Pythagoras carried away his disciples from the world of forms and realities ; he effaced time and space and took them with him down into *the great Monad*, into the presence of the increate Being.

Pythagoras called it the first One in which existed harmony, the masculine Fire traversing everything, the Spirit which moves by itself, the Indivisible and

mighty non-Manifested of which the ephemeral worlds manifest the creative thought, the Only, the Eternal, the Unchangeable, concealed beneath the many things which pass away and change. "Essence in itself escapes man," said Philolaus, the Pythagorean. "He knows only the things of this world in which the finite combines with the infinite. And how can he know them? for between things and himself there is a harmony and relation, a common principle; and this principle is given them by the One who gives to them, along with their very essence, measure and intelligibility. It is the common measure between subject and object, the reason of things by which the soul participates in the final reason of the One."[1] But how can one approach It, the inconceivable Being? Has any one ever seen the Master of time, the Soul of the suns, the Spring of intelligences? No; and it is only by mingling with it that one penetrates its

[1] In transcendent mathematics it is demonstrated algebraically that zero multiplied by infinity is equal to One. Zero, in the order of absolute things, signifies the indeterminate Being. The Infinite, the Eternal in the language of the temples, was marked by a circle of a serpent biting its tail, signifying the Infinite moving itself. Now, once the Infinite is determined it produces all the numbers it contains in its great unity, and which it governs in perfect harmony.

Such is the transcendent meaning of the first problem of the Pythagorean theogony, the reason which brings it to pass that the great Monad contains all the small ones, and that all the numbers spring from the great Unity in movement.

essence. It is like an invisible fire placed in the centre of the universe, its nimble flame circulating throughout the worlds and moving the circumference. He added that it was the work of initiation to draw near the great Being, by resembling it, by making oneself as perfect as possible, dominating things by intelligence, thus becoming active like it, and not passive like them. "Is not your being, your soul, a microcosm, a small universe? Still, it is full of storm and discord. Well, the thing to do is to realize therein unity in harmony. Then and then only will God descend into your consciousness, and you will share in his power and make of your will the hearth-stone, the altar of Hestia, the throne of Jupiter!"

God, the indivisible substance, has accordingly for number the Unity which contains the Infinite, for name, that of Father, Creator, or Eternal-Masculine, and for sign, the living Fire, symbol of the Spirit, essence of the Whole. This is the first of the principles.

But the divine faculties are like the mystic lotus which the Egyptian initiate, lying in his tomb, sees emerging from the blackness of the night. At first it is only a shining spot, then it opens like a flower, and the glowing centre expands like the thousand leaves of a rose of light.

Pythagoras said that the great Monad acts as a creative *Dyad*. Immediately God manifests himself, he is double; indivisible essence and divisible substance; active, animating, masculine principle, and passive, feminine principle, or animated plastic matter. Accordingly the Dyad represented the union of the Eternal-Masculine and the Eternal-Feminine in God, the two essential and corresponding divine faculties. Orpheus had poetically expressed this idea in the line:

Jupiter is the divine Bridegroom and Spouse.

All polytheisms have intuitively been conscious of this idea, representing the Divinity under the masculine, sometimes under the feminine form.

This living, eternal Nature, this mighty Spouse of God, is not only the terrestrial but also the celestial nature, invisible to our eyes of flesh, the Soul of the world, the primordial Light, in turn Maia, Isis or Cybele, who, first vibrating beneath the divine impulse, contains the essences of all souls, the spiritual types of all beings. Then it is Demeter, the living earth, and all earths with the bodies they enfold in which these souls have come to be incarnated. Afterwards it is Woman, the companion of Man. In humanity Woman represents Nature, and the perfect image of God is not Man alone, but Man and Woman. Hence their

invincible and fascinating, their fatal attraction, the intoxication of Love, in which the dream of infinite creations has play, and the dim presentiment that the Eternal-Masculine and the Eternal-Feminine enjoy perfect union in the bosom of God. "Honour be to Woman, on earth as in heaven," said Pythagoras and all the initiates of old. "She enables us to understand that Mighty Woman, Nature. May she be the sanctified image of Nature and help us to mount gradually to that great Soul of the World which gives birth, preserves and renews, to divine Cybele who bears along the people of souls in her mantle of light."

The Monad represents the essence of God, the Dyad, his generative and reproductive faculty. The latter brings the world into being, the visible unfolding of God in time and space. Now the real world is triple. For just as man is composed of three elements, which are distinct though blended in one another, body, soul, and spirit ; so the universe is divided into three concentric spheres: the natural, the human, and the divine world. The *Triad* or *ternary law* is accordingly the constitutive life of things and the real key to life. It is met with at every step on the ladder of life, from the constitution of the organic cell through the physiological constitution of the animal body, the working of the

blood and the cerebro-spinal systems, right on to the super-physical constitution of man, to that of the universe and of God. Thus, as by enchantment, it opens up to the amazed spirit the inner structure of the universe, shows the infinite correspondences of the microcosm and the macrocosm. It acts like a light, passing into things to make them transparent, lighting up small and great worlds like so many magic lanterns.

Let us explain this law by the essential correspondence of man with the universe.

Pythagoras affirmed that the mind of man, or the intellect, takes from God its immortal and invisible, its absolutely active, nature. For the mind is that which moves itself. He defined the body as being its mortal, divisible, and passive part, and thought that what we call *soul* is closely united to the mind, though formed of a third intermediate element, coming from the *cosmic fluid*. The soul, therefore, resembles an ethereal body which the spirit weaves and builds for itself. Without this ethereal body, the material body could not be purified, it would be only an inert and lifeless mass.[1] The soul possesses a form like that of the body it vivifies, and which it survives after dissolution or death. Then, as

[1] Doctrine identical with that of the initiate St. Paul, who speaks of the *spiritual body*.

Pythagoras expresses it, in terms repeated by Plato, the *subtile chariot* either carries off the spirit to divine spheres or allows it to fall back into the dusky regions of matter, according as it is more or less good or bad. The constitution and evolution of man is repeated in ever-increasing circles over the whole scale of beings and in every sphere. Just as the human Psyche struggles between the spirit which attracts and the body which holds it back, so also humanity evolves between the natural and animal world into which it plunges by reason of its earthly roots, and the divine world of pure spirits, its heavenly source, towards which it aspires to rise. And what happens in humanity happens in all lands and solar systems in ever differing proportions, ever new modes. Extend the circle to infinity, and, if you can, form one single concept of the limitless worlds. What will you find there? The creative thought, the astral fluid, and worlds in evolution: the spirit, soul, and body of divinity. Raising veil after veil and fathoming the faculties of this divinity itself, you will there see Triad and Duad clothing themselves in the dull depths of the Monad, like an efflorescence of stars in the abyss of immensity.

From this rapid outline some estimate may be formed of the great importance Pythagoras attached

to the ternary law, which may be said to form the corner-stone of esoteric science. All the mighty religious initiators have been conscious of it, every theosophist has had a presentiment of the same. An oracle of Zoroaster says as follows:

> The number three reigns everywhere in the universe,
> The Monad is its principle.

The incomparable merit of Pythagoras consists in having formulated it with all the clearness of Greek genius. He made of it the centre of his theogony and the foundation of the sciences. Already veiled in the exoteric writings of Plato, though altogether misunderstood by subsequent philosophers, this conception, in modern times, has been comprehended by only a few rare initiates of the occult sciences.[1] Henceforth may be seen what a broad and solid basis the law of the universal ternary offered to the classification of sciences, and to the building up of cosmogony and psychology.

Just as the universal ternary is concentrated in the unity of God or in the Monad, so the human ternary is concentrated in the conscience of the ego and in the will which gathers together in its living

[1] In the first rank of these must be placed Fabre d'Olivert (*Vers dorés de Pythagore*). This living conception of the forces of the universe, traversing it from top to bottom, has nothing to do with the *thesis*, the *antithesis* and the *synthesis* of Hegel, which are simply *jeux d'esprit*.

unity all the faculties of body, soul, and spirit. The human and divine ternary, summed up in the Monad, constitutes the *sacred Tetrad.* But it is only relatively that man realizes his own unity. His will which acts over the whole of his being cannot, however, act fully and simultaneously in its three organs, *i.e.* in instinct, soul, and intellect. The universe and God himself appear to him only in turns, successively reflected by these three mirrors:—1. Seen through instinct and the kaleidoscope of the senses, God is multiple and as infinite as his manifestations. Hence polytheism where the number of the gods is unlimited.—2. Seen through the reasonable soul, God is double, *i.e.* matter and spirit. Hence the dualism of Zoroaster, the Manichaeans, and several other religions.—3. Seen through pure intellect, he is threefold, *i.e.* spirit, soul and body in all the manifestations of the universe. Hence the trinitarian cults of India (Brahma, Vishnu and Siva) and the trinity of Christianity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost).—4. Conceived of by the will which sums up the whole, God is one, and we have the Hermetic monotheism of Moses in all its rigour. Here there is no longer personification or incarnation, we leave the visible universe and return to the Absolute. The Eternal alone rules over the world, now reduced to dust. The diversity

of religions, accordingly, comes from the fact that man realizes divinity only through his own being which is relative and finite, whilst God is continually realizing the unity of the three worlds in the harmony of the universe.

This final application would alone demonstrate the—in some way—magic virtue of the *Tetragram* in the order of ideas. In it was found not only the principles of the sciences, the law of beings and their mode of evolution, but also the very reason of the different religions and their superior unity. This was in reality the universal key. Hence the enthusiasm with which Lysis speaks of it in the *Golden Verses;* one can now understand why the Pythagoreans swore by this great symbol:

> "I swear it by him who has transmitted into our souls the Sacred Quaternion, the source of nature, whose cause is eternal."

Pythagoras carried a great deal farther the teaching of numbers. In each of them he defined a principle, a law, an active force of the universe. He said, however, that the essential principles are contained in the first four numbers, since all the others are formed by adding or multiplying them. In the same way the infinite variety of beings composing the universe is produced by the combina-

tions of the three primordial forces: matter, soul, spirit, under the creating impulse of the divine unity which mingles and differentiates, concentrates and separates. Along with the chief masters of esoteric science Pythagoras attached great importance to the numbers seven and ten. *Seven*, the compound of three and four, signifies the union of man and divinity. It is the figure of the adepts, of the great initiates, and, since it expresses the complete realization in all things through seven degrees, it represents the law of evolution. The *number ten* formed by the addition of the first four numbers, and containing the former number, is the perfect number, *par excellence*, for it represents all the principles of divinity, evolved and re-united in a new unity.

On finishing the teaching of his theogony, Pythagoras showed his disciples the nine Muses, personifying the sciences, grouped three by three, presiding over the triple ternary evolved in nine worlds, and forming, along with Hestia, the divine science, guardian of the primordial Fire—*the sacred Decad.*

THIRD DEGREE—PERFECTION[1]

Cosmogony and psychology—The evolution of the soul

The disciple had received the principles of science from his master. This first initiation had dispelled the dense scales of matter which covered the eyes of his spirit. Tearing away the shining veil of mythology, it had removed him from the visible world to cast him blindly into boundless space and plunge him into the sun of Intelligence, whence Truth beams forth over the three worlds. The science of numbers, however, was nothing but the beginning of the great initiation. Armed with these principles, he had now to descend the heights of the Absolute and plunge into the depths of nature, there to lay hold of the divine thought in the formation of things and the evolution of the soul through the worlds. Esoteric cosmogony and psychology touched the greatest mysteries of life as well as dangerous and jealously-guarded secrets of the occult arts and sciences.

For this reason Pythagoras loved to give these lessons, when the profane light of day had disappeared, at night, by the sea-side, on the terraces of

[1] In Greek: *Teleiôtes.*

the Temple of Ceres, before the gentle murmur of the Ionian sea with its melodious cadence, and beneath the distant phosphorescence of the starry Kosmos; or else in the crypts of the sanctuary where a gentle steady light was given by Egyptian lamps of naphtha. Female initiates were present at these night meetings. At times, priests or priestesses from Delphi or Eleusis came to confirm the master's teachings by relating their experiences or through the lucid words of clairvoyant sleep.

The material and the spiritual evolution of the world are two inverse movements, though parallel and concordant along the whole scale of being. The one can be explained only by the other, and, considered together, they explain the world. Material evolution represents the manifestation of God in matter by the soul of the world which works out matter. Spiritual evolution represents the working out of consciousness in the individual monads and their attempts, through the cycle of lives, to rejoin the divine spirit from which they emanate. To see the universe from the physical or from the spiritual point of view is not considering something different, it is looking at the world by the two opposite ends. From the terrestrial point of view, the rational explanation of the world ought to begin by material evolution, for it is this side of it which

appears to us, but by enabling us to see the work of the universal spirit in matter and to follow up the development of the individual monads, it insensibly leads on to the spiritual point of view and causes us to pass from the without to the within of things, from the reverse of the world to its face side.

This, at any rate, was the procedure of Pythagoras, who regarded the universe as a living being, animated by a great soul and filled with a mighty intelligence. The second part of his teaching began with the cosmogony.

If we relied on the divisions of the heavens we find in the exoteric fragments of the Pythagoreans, this astronomy would be similar to that of Ptolemy ; the earth motionless and the sun with the planets and the whole of the firmament turning round it. The very principle of this astronomy, however, warns us that it is purely symbolical. In the centre of his universe Pythagoras places Fire (of which the sun is only a reflection). Now in the whole of Eastern esoterism, Fire is the representative sign of Spirit, of divine, universal Consciousness. What our philosophers generally take as the natural philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato is accordingly nothing else than an imaged description of their secret philosophy, clear and light-giving to initiates, but all the more impenetrable

by the mass of people as it was considered to be simple natural philosophy. We must consequently seek therein a kind of cosmography of the life of souls and nothing else. The sublunary region designates the sphere in which terrestrial attraction operates and is called the circle of generation. Initiates mean by this that for us the earth is the region of corporeal life. Here take place all the operations accompanying the incarnation and disincarnation of souls. The sphere of the six planets and of the sun responds to ascending categories of spirits. Olympus, conceived as a rolling sphere, is called the heaven of the stationary, because it is assimilated to the sphere of perfect souls. This infantile astronomy accordingly masks a conception of the spiritual universe.

Everything, nevertheless, inclines us to believe that the initiates of old, and especially Pythagoras, had far more correct notions of the physical universe. Aristotle positively affirms that the Pythagoreans believed in the movement of the earth around the sun. Copernicus asserts that the idea of the rotation of the earth on its axis came to him whilst reading, in Cicero, that a certain Hycetas of Syracuse had spoken of the daily motion of the earth. Pythagoras taught the double movement of the earth to his disciples of the third

degree. Without having the exact measurements of modern science, he knew, as did the priests of Memphis, that the planets which come from the sun turn around it; that the stars are so many solar systems governed by the same laws as ours, and that each has its place in the immense universe. He also knew that each solar world forms a small universe which has its correspondence in the spiritual world and its own heaven. The planets served to mark the scale thereof. Still, these notions which would have overthrown popular mythology, and would have been set down by the people as sacrilegious, were never entrusted to popular writing. They were taught only under the seal of profound secrecy.[1]

The visible universe, said Pythagoras, the

[1] Certain strange definitions, in metaphorical form, which have been handed down to us and come from the secret teaching of the master, give us some idea, in their occult signification, of the magnificent conception Pythagoras had of the Kosmos. Speaking of the constellations, he called the Great and the Little Bear the hands of Rhea-Kybele. Now Rhea-Kybele means, esoterically, the rolling astral light, the divine spouse of universal fire, or of the creative Spirit, which, becoming concentrated in the solar systems, attracts the immaterial essences of beings, seizes them, and forces them into the whirl of lives. He called the planets the dogs of Proserpine. This strange expression has only an esoteric meaning. Proserpine, the goddess of souls, presided over their incarnation in matter. Pythagoras accordingly called the planets the dogs of Proserpine because they keep and retain the incarnated souls, just as the mythological Cerberus guards the souls in the infernal regions.

heavens with all their stars, are only a passing form of the soul of the world, of the great Maia who concentrates the scattered matter in the infinitudes of space and then dissolves it and scatters it in an imponderable cosmic fluid. Each solar vortex possesses a fragment of this universal soul, which evolves in its bosom for millions of centuries with a special force of impulse and measure. As regards the powers and kingdoms, the species and the living souls which appear successively in the constellations of this little world, they come from God, descending from the Father; that is to say, they emanate from an immutable and superior spiritual order, as well as from a former material evolution, I mean an extinct solar system. Of these invisible powers, some, which are altogether immortal, direct the formation of this world, the others await its unfolding in cosmic sleep or in divine dream, to return into visible generations, according to their rank and in obedience to eternal law. All the same, the solar soul and its central fire, moved directly by the great Monad, works the matter into a state of fusion. The planets are daughters of the sun. Each of them, elaborated by the forces of attraction and rotation inherent in matter, is endowed with a semi-conscious soul issuing from the solar soul; it has its distinct character, its special *rôle* in evolu-

tion. As each planet is a different expression of the thought of God, as it exercises a special function in the planetary chain, the ancient sages have identified the names of the planets with those of the great gods who represent the divine faculties in action in the universe.

The *four elements*, of which the constellations and all beings are formed, designate four graduated states of matter. The first, being the densest, is the one most refractory to spirit; the last, being the most refined, shows great affinity for spirit. *Earth* represents the solid state; *water*, the liquid state; *air*, the gaseous state, and *fire*, the imponderable state. The fifth, the *etheric* element, represents a state of matter so fine and vivid that it is no longer atomic, and possesses the property of universal penetration. It is the original, cosmic fluid, the astral light or soul of the world.

Afterwards Pythagoras spoke to his disciples of the earth's revolutions, according to the traditions of Egypt and Asia. He knew that the earth, in a state of fusion, was first surrounded by a gaseous atmosphere which, becoming liquefied by successive coolings, had formed the seas. As was his wont, he summed up this idea metaphorically by saying that the seas were produced *by the tears of Saturn* (cosmic time).

And now the kingdoms appear, and invisible germs, floating in the ethereal *aura* of the earth, whirl about in its gaseous robe and are then attracted to the deep bosom of the ocean and over the first continents that pierce their way to the surface. The vegetable and animal worlds, still in confusion, appear almost at the same time. Esoteric teachings admit of the transformation of animal species, not only in accordance with the secondary law of selection, but also by the primary law of the percussion of the earth by celestial powers, and of all living beings by intelligible principles and invisible forces. When a new species appears on the globe, the reason is that a race of souls of a superior type is being incarnated at a given epoch in the descendants of the former species, to cause it to mount a step in the ladder of evolution by moulding it afresh and transforming it into its image. Thus the esoteric doctrine explains the appearance of man on earth. From the point of view of terrestrial evolution, man is the latest branch, the crown of all the former species. But this point of view is no more sufficient to explain his entrance on to the stage of life, than it would be to explain the appearance of the first sea-weed or the first crustacean in the depths of the sea. All these successive creations infer, as does each birth, the percussion of the

earth by the invisible powers which create life. That of man infers the previous reign of a celestial humanity presiding over the unfolding of terrestrial humanity, and sends it, like the waves of a formidable tide, fresh torrents of souls which become incarnate in its womb and cause to shine forth the first beams of a divine light in that bold, impulsive, terrified being who, though only just freed from the darkness of animality, is forced, in order to live, to struggle with all the powers of nature.

Pythagoras had obtained in Egyptian temples clear notions as to the mighty revolutions of the globe. The Indian and Egyptian teachings spoke of the existence of the ancient austral continent which had produced the red race and a powerful civilization, called by the Greeks, the Atlantides. They attributed the alternate emergence and immersion of continents to the oscillation of the poles and acknowledged that humanity had thus passed through six deluges. Each interdiluvian cycle brings about the predominance of a great human race. In the midst of the partial eclipses of civilization and human faculties, there is a general ascending movement.

Here we have humanity constituted and the races launched in their career through the cataclysms of the globe. But on this globe which, at birth, we

take as being the immutable base of the world and which itself is carried along floating in space, on these continents which emerge from the seas to disappear afresh, amid these passing peoples, these crumbling civilizations, what is the mighty and poignant, the eternal mystery? This is the great inner problem, that of each and all, the problem of the soul which discovers in itself an abyss of darkness and light, regarding itself with a mixture of delight and terror and saying to itself: "I am not of this world, for it is not sufficient to explain me. I do not come from earth, and I am going elsewhere. Where?" That is the mystery of Psyche, the mystery containing all the rest.

The cosmogony of the visible world, said Pythagoras, has led us to the history of the earth, and the latter to the mystery of the human soul. With it we touch the sanctuary of sanctuaries, the holy of holies. Once its consciousness aroused, the soul becomes for itself the most astonishing of sights. But even this consciousness is only the enlightened surface of its being, in which it suspects there to be dark and unfathomable abysses. In its unknown depths, the divine Psyche contemplates with fascinated look all lives and worlds, past and present, and the future joined to them by Eternity. "Know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe

of the gods." Such was the secret of the sages and initiates. To penetrate through this narrow door into the immensity of the invisible universe, let us awake in ourselves direct vision of the purified soul, and arm ourselves with the torch of intelligence, with the science of the sacred principles and numbers.

Pythagoras thus passed from physical cosmogony to spiritual cosmogony. After the evolution of the earth, he told of that of the soul through the different worlds. Outside of initiation, this doctrine is known under the name of *transmigration of souls.* Regarding no part of secret doctrine has there been more false reasoning than here, to such an extent indeed that ancient and modern literature are acquainted with it only through puerile travesties. Plato himself, who more than any other philosopher contributed to the popularizing of the doctrine, has only given fantastic and at times extravagant glimpses of it, either because prudence or his oath of secrecy prevented him from telling all he knew. Few now doubt the fact that it must have had for initiates a scientific aspect, opening up endless perspectives and affording divine consolation to the soul. The doctrine of the ascensional life of the soul through series of existences is the common feature of

esoteric traditions and the crown of theosophy. I will add that it is of the utmost importance to us. For the man of the present day rejects with equal scorn the abstract and vague immortality of philosophy and the childish heaven of an infant religion. And yet he abhors the dryness and nothingness of materialism. Unconsciously he aspires to the consciousness of an *organic immortality* responding at once to the demands of his reason and the indestructible needs of his soul. Besides, it can well be understood why the initiates of the ancient religions, though they were acquainted with these truths, kept them so secret. They are of a nature to turn the minds of those untrained to receive them. They are closely allied to the profound mysteries of spiritual generation, of sex and generation by flesh, on which hang the destinies of future humanity.

It was therefore with a kind of dread that the supreme hour for this esoteric teaching was awaited. Through the words of Pythagoras, as by some slow incantation, heavy matter seemed to lose its weight, the things of earth became transparent, those of heaven visible to the spirit. Golden and azure spheres, furrowed with luminous essence, unfolded their orbs right into the infinitudes of space.

The disciples, both men and women, grouped round the master in a subterranean part of the Temple of Ceres called the crypt of Proserpine, listened with throbbing emotions to *the celestial history of Psyche.*

What is the human soul? A portion of the mighty soul of the world, a spark of the divine spirit, an immortal monad. Still, though its possible future opens out into the unfathomable splendours of divine consciousness, its mysterious dawn dates back to the origin of organized matter. To become what it is in present-day humanity, it must have passed through all the reigns of nature, the whole scale of beings gradually developing through a series of innumerable existences. The spirit which fashions the worlds and condenses cosmic matter into enormous masses manifests itself with varying intensity and an ever greater concentration in the successive reigns of nature. A blind and confused force in the mineral, individualized in the plant, polarized in the sensations and instincts of animals, it stretches towards the conscious monad in this slow elaboration; and the elementary monad is visible in the most inferior of animals. The animal and spiritual element accordingly exists in every kingdom, though only in infinitesimal quantities in the lower kingdoms.

The souls which exist in the state of germs in the lower kingdoms stay there without moving away for immense periods of time, and it is only after great cosmic revolutions that, in changing planets, they pass to a higher reign. All they can do during a planet's period of life is to mount a few degrees. Where does the monad begin? As well ask at what hour a nebula was formed or a sun shone for the first time. Anyhow, what constitutes the essence of any man must have evolved for millions of years through a chain of lower planets and kingdoms, keeping through all these existences an individual principle which follows it everywhere. This obscure but indestructible individuality constitutes the divine seal of the monad in which God wills to manifest Himself through consciousness.

The higher one ascends in the series of organisms, the more the monad develops the principles latent in it. Polarized force becomes capable of sensation, capacity of sensation becomes instinct, and instinct becomes intelligence. In proportion as the flickering flame of consciousness is lit, this soul becomes more independent of the body, more capable of existing freely. The fluid, non-polarized soul of minerals and vegetables is bound to the elements of earth. That of animals, strongly attracted by terrestrial fire, stays there for some

time after leaving its body, and then returns to the surface of the globe to re-incarnate in its species without ever having the possibility of leaving the lower layers of the air. These are peopled with elementals or animal souls which play their part in atmospheric life and have a great occult influence over man. The human soul alone comes from the sky, and returns there after death. At what period of its long cosmic existence has the elementary become the human soul? Through what incandescent crucible, what ethereal flame has it passed? The transformation has been possible in an interplanetary period only by the meeting of human souls already fully formed which have developed in the elementary soul its spiritual principle and have impressed their divine prototype like a seal of fire in its plastic substance.

But what journeys and incarnations, what planetary cycles must still be traversed for the human soul thus formed to become the man we are acquainted with! According to the esoteric traditions of India and Egypt, the individuals of whom mankind at present consists, began their human existence on other planets, in which matter is far less dense than our own. Man's body was then almost vaporous, his incarnations light and easy. His faculties of direct spiritual perception

were evidently very powerful and subtile in this first human phase ; reason and intelligence on the other hand were in an embryonic condition. In this half-corporeal, half-spiritual state, man saw spirits, everything was full of splendour and charm to his eyes, full of music to his ears. He could hear the harmony of the spheres. He neither thought nor reflected, scarcely even willed, but simply lived, drinking in sounds, forms and light, floating like a dream from life to death and from death to life. It was this that the Orphic poems called *the heaven of Saturn*. It is only by becoming incarnate on planets ever denser and denser that man became materialized, according to the doctrine of Hermes. By becoming incarnate in denser matter, humanity has lost its spiritual sense, but by an ever-increasing struggle with the outside world, it has powerfully developed its reason, intelligence and will. The earth is the last rung of this descent into matter which Moses calls the exit from paradise, and Orpheus, the fall into the sublunary circle. From these depths man can, with difficulty, reascend the circles in a series of new existences and regain his spiritual faculties by the free exercise of his intellect and will-power. Then only, say the disciples of Hermes and Orpheus, does man acquire by his *action* the consciousness and the possession

of the divine ; then only does he become the *son of God.* Those who have borne this name on earth must, before appearing among us, have descended and remounted to the dreadful spiral.

Then what is the humble Psyche at its origin ? A passing breath, a floating germ, a wind-swept bird, migrating from life to life. And yet, after innumerable lapses, and millions of years, it has become the daughter of God and no longer recognizes any other home than heaven ! This is why Greek poetry, so profound and luminous in its symbolism, compared the soul sometimes to the winged insect, sometimes to the earth-worm, and again to the heavenly butterfly. How often has it been a chrysalis, and how often a winged creature of light ? Though it will never know this, it still feels that it has wings !

Such is the vertiginous past of the human soul. It affords us an explanation of its present condition and enables us to glimpse into its future.

What is the position of divine Psyche in earth life? The slightest reflection suffices to show us that we could not imagine a stranger or more tragic one, since being painfully roused to consciousness in the dense atmosphere of earth, the soul has entwined itself in the folds of the body. Only through it does the soul live, breathe, and think, and yet it is not the

body. In proportion as it develops, it feels increasing within itself a quivering light, something invisible and immaterial which it calls its spirit, its conscience. Yes, man has an innate sentiment of his triple nature, for, even in his instinctive language, he distinguishes his body from his soul, and his soul from his spirit. The soul, however, captive and troubled, struggles between its two companions as between the thousand twining folds of a serpent and an invisible genius calling it, whose presence, however, can only be felt by passing gleams and the beating of his wings. At times this body absorbs it to such an extent that it is only through its passions and sensations that the soul lives; with the body it rolls in the blood-stained orgies of anger or the denser mist of carnal pleasure, until, of its own accord, it becomes terrified by reason of the profound silence of its invisible companion. Then again, attracted by the latter, it rises to such lofty heights of thought, that it forgets the existence of the body until a peremptory call reminds it of its presence. And yet an inner voice tells it that between itself and the invisible guest the bond cannot be broken, whilst death will break its connection with the body.

Tossed to and fro between the two in an eternal struggle, the soul seeks in vain for happiness and

truth. In vain does it seek to find itself in passing sensations, in fugitive thoughts, in the world which changes like a mirage. Finding that nothing is lasting, troubled and driven about like a leaf in the wind, it has doubts of itself and of a divine world which is only revealed to it by its own pain and the impossibility it feels of reaching this world. Human ignorance is written in the contradictions of pretended sages, and human sadness in the unfathomable hunger of the human glance. Finally, whatever the range of his knowledge, birth and death shut in man between two fatal bounds. These are two gates of darkness, beyond which he sees nothing. The flame of his life is lit as he enters the one and extinguished as he leaves the other. Can it be so with the soul? If not, then what becomes of it?

Many have been the replies which philosophers have given to this poignant problem. In its essence that given by theosophical initiates of all times is the same. It is in accord with universal feeling and the inner spirit of religions. The latter has expressed the truth only under superstitious or symbolical forms. The esoteric doctrine opens up far wider perspectives; its affirmations are strictly related to the laws of universal evolution. This is what initiates, instructed by tradition and by the

many experiences of psychic life, have said to man: That which is restless in thyself, which thou callest thy soul, is an ethereal double of the body which contains in itself an immortal spirit. The spirit builds and forms for itself, by its own activity, its spiritual body. Pythagoras calls it *the subtile chariot of the soul*, because it is destined to remove it from earth after death. *This spiritual body is the organ of the spirit*, its sensitive envelope and instrument of volition; it serves to animate the body, which would otherwise remain inert. In apparitions of the dying or the dead, *this double* becomes visible, under circumstances, however, which always presuppose a special nervous condition of the seer. The degree of fineness, power and perfection of the spiritual body varies according to the quality of the spirit which it contains, and between the substance of souls woven in the astral light, though impregnated with the imponderable fluids of earth and heaven, there are more numerous distinctions, greater differences than between all earthly bodies and all states of ponderable matter. This astral body, though far finer and more perfect than the earthly one, is not immortal as is the monad which it contains. It changes and becomes purified according to its different environments. The spirit is perpetually moulding and transforming it into

its own image ; it never leaves it however, though it unrobes itself of it by degrees ; it is continually clothing itself with more ethereal substances. This was the teaching of Pythagoras, who could not conceive of abstract spiritual entity, the formless monad. Spirit in itself, whether in the far-away sky or on earth, must have an organ ; that organ is the living soul, whether bestial or sublime, obscure or radiant, retaining, however, the human form, the image of God.

What happens at death ? When the final hour approaches, the soul generally has a presentiment of its coming separation from the body. It sees over again its earthly existence in abridged scenes rapidly succeeding one another and of startling clearness. When the exhausted life stops in the brain, the soul becomes perplexed and altogether loses consciousness. If it is holy and pure, its spiritual senses have already been aroused by gradual detachment from matter. Before dying, in some way or other, if only by the introspection of its own state, it has already felt the presence of another world. Beneath the silent, distant appeals, the vague beams of the Invisible, earth has already lost its consistence, and when the soul finally leaves the cold corpse, rejoicing in its deliverance, it feels itself carried away into a glorious

light, towards the spiritual family to which it belongs. It is not so, however, with the ordinary man, whose life has been divided between material instincts and higher aspirations. He awakes in a state of semi-consciousness, as though in the torpor of a nightmare. No longer has he an arm to stretch forth or a voice to cry out with; still, he remembers and suffers, existing, as he does, in a limbus of darkness and terror. All that he sees is the body from which he is detached, but for which he still feels an invincible attraction. It is for it that he lived; and now, what is it? In terror he looks for himself in the icy fibres of his brain, in the stagnant blood of his veins, and no longer finds himself. Is he dead or living? He would like to see, to hold on to something, but he cannot see, he can take hold of nothing. Darkness is all around, chaos within. He sees only one thing, and this thing attracts and terrifies him at the same time—the sinister phosphorescence of his own earthly tenement: and the nightmare recommences.

This state may be prolonged for months or years. Its duration depends on the strength of the material instincts of the soul. Still, good or evil, infernal or celestial, this soul will gradually become conscious of itself and of its new condition. Once free from its body, it will escape into the abysses of the

terrestrial atmosphere, whose electric streams carry it here and there, and whose many-shaped inhabitants, wandering about, more or less like itself, it is beginning to perceive, like fugitive flashes in a thick mist. Then there begins a desperate, vertiginous struggle on the part of the soul, which is still dull and heavy, to rise into the upper strata of the air, to free itself from earthly attraction and reach, in the heaven of our planetary system, the region proper to it and which friendly guides alone can show it. But before this can take place, a long period must often intervene. This phase of the life of the soul has borne different names in religions and mythologies. Moses called it Horeb; Orpheus, Erebus; Christianity, Purgatory, or *the Valley of the Shadow of Death.* The Greek initiates identified it with the cone of shadow which the earth is always trailing behind it, which shadow reaches as far as the moon; for this reason they called it the *abyss of Hecate.* In these mirky depths, say the disciples of Orpheus and of Pythagoras, are tossed to and fro the souls which make desperate efforts to reach the circle of the moon, though the violence of the winds beats them back to earth by thousands. Homer and Virgil compare them with whirling leaves, or swarms of birds maddened by the tempest.

The moon played an important part in ancient esoterism. On its surface, facing the heavens, the souls were regarded as purifying their astral body before continuing their celestial ascent. It was also supposed that heroes and great spirits took up their abode for a time on the portion of its surface turned towards the earth, in order to clothe themselves in bodies appropriate to our world before reincarnation. There was attributed to the moon, in a certain measure, the power to magnetize the soul for earthly incarnation, and to demagnetize it for its heavenly abode. In a general way, these assertions, to which initiates attached a meaning that was at once real and symbolical, signified that the soul must pass through an intermediary stage of purification and free itself from the impurities of earth before continuing its journey.

In what terms can one describe the arrival of the pure soul into its own world? The earth has disappeared like a dream. A fresh sleep, a delightful swoon now envelops it as in a caressing embrace. All that it now sees is its winged guide carrying it away with lightning rapidity into the depths of space. What can we say of its awakening in the vales of some ethereal star, devoid of elemental atmosphere, where everything—mountains, flowers and vegetation—is of an exquisite, sensitive and

eloquent nature? Above all else, what can one say of those luminous forms, men and women, surrounding it like a sacred procession, to initiate it into the sacred mystery of its new life? Are they gods or goddesses? No; they are souls like itself; the wonder consists in the fact that their inmost thoughts beam forth in their countenance, that tenderness and love, desire or fear radiate through those diaphanous bodies in a scale of luminous colorations. Here, body and countenance are no longer the mask of the soul; the transparent soul appears in its real form, shining forth in the clear light of unpolluted truth. Psyche has returned to her divine home. The secret light in which she laves herself, which emanates from her and returns in the smile of beloved ones; this light of great felicity is the soul of the world wherein she is conscious of the presence of God! No more obstacles now! She will love and know; she will live with no other limit than her own desire to soar. Strange and marvellous happiness! She feels that strong, profound affinities unite her to all her companions. For in the life beyond, those who do not love flee from one another; those alone meet together who understand one another. With them she will celebrate the divine mysteries in more beautiful temples, in a more perfect com-

munion. These will be living poems, ever new, each soul of which will be a strophe, and each one will live again its life in that of others. Then, quivering with delight, she will spring forth into the radiance on high, to the call of the Messengers, the winged Spirits, those who are called Gods, for they have escaped the circle of generations. Led on by these sublime intelligences, she will try to decipher the great poem of the Secret Word, to understand what she can grasp of the symphony of the universe. She will receive hierarchical information from the circles of Divine Love ; she will endeavour to see the Essences which the animating Spirits scatter throughout the worlds; she will contemplate the glorified Spirits, living rays of the God of Gods, but without being able to bear their blinding glory which makes suns look pale as smoky lamps! Then, when she returns terrified from these dazzling flights—for she shudders in presence of such immensities—she will hear from afar the call of beloved voices, and will fall back on the golden strands of her star, beneath the rose-coloured veil of a billowy sleep, peopled with forms clothed in white, and filled with sweet perfumes and melodious strains.

Such is the heavenly life of the soul, scarcely conceived of by our earth-clouded minds, but

divined by initiates, lived by seers and demonstrated by the law of analogy and universal concordance. In vain do our rude imagery and imperfect language attempt to translate it; each living soul, however, feels the germ of this life in its hidden depths. Though in our present condition it is impossible for us to realize it, the philosophy of occultism has formulated its psychical conditions. The idea of ethereal constellations, invisible to us, though forming part of our solar system and serving as an abode for happy souls, is often found in the secrets of esoteric tradition. Pythagoras calls it a counterpart of the earth: the *antichthone*, lit up by the central Fire, *i.e.*, by the divine light. At the end of the *Phaedo*, Plato describes this spiritual land at some length, though in disguised fashion. He says that it is as light as air, and is surrounded by an ethereal atmosphere. In the other life, we see that the soul preserves the whole of its individuality. Of its terrestrial existence it retains none but noble memories leaving the others to fall into the forgetfulness which the poets called the waves of Lethe. Freed from all defilement, the human soul feels its consciousness restored, so to speak. From without the universe, it has come back to within it; Cybele-Maïa, the soul of the world, has, with deep yearning, drawn

it back to her bosom. Here, Psyche will work out her dream, that dream continually broken and ever being recommenced on earth. She will work it out in accordance with her earthly effort and acquired intelligence, but she will magnify it an hundredfold. Crushed hopes will again revive beneath the dawn of her divine life ; the gloomy sunsets of earth will kindle into the dazzling light of day. Though man had lived only one hour of enthusiasm or self-denial, that single pure note, torn away from the discordant scale of his earthly life, will be repeated in his after-life in marvellous progressions and Æolian harmonies. The fugitive delights that we obtain from the enchantment of music, the ecstasy of love or the raptures of charity are only the stray notes of a harmony to which we shall then be listening. Is this simply saying that such life will be only one long dream, one magnificent hallucination ? What is there truer than that which the soul feels within itself and which it realizes by its divine communion with other souls ? Initiates, being consistent and transcendent idealists, have always thought that the only real and lasting things on earth are manifestations of spiritual Beauty, Love and Truth. As the after-life can have no other object than this Truth, this Beauty and this Love for those who make them the object of their lives,

they are convinced that heaven will be truer than earth.

The heavenly life of the soul may last hundreds or thousands of years, according to its degree or strength of impulse. It belongs, however, only to the perfect, to the most sublime souls, to those who have passed beyond the circle of generations, to prolong it indefinitely. The latter have not only attained to temporary rest, but to immortal action in truth ; they have created wings for themselves. Being light itself, they are inviolable; seeing across the worlds, they rule them. The rest are carried along by an inflexible law to re-incarnation, in order to undergo a fresh trial, and to rise to a higher rung or to fall lower if they fail.

The spiritual, like the terrestrial life, has its beginning, its apogee and its decline. When this life is exhausted, the soul feels itself overcome with heaviness, giddiness and melancholy. An invincible force once again attracts it to the struggles and sufferings of earth. This desire is mingled with terrible dread and a mighty grief at leaving divine life. But the time has come ; the law must be obeyed. The heaviness increases, a sensation of dimness is felt. The soul no longer sees its companions of light except through a veil, and this veil, ever denser and denser, gives a presentiment

of the coming separation. It hears their sad farewells; the tears of the blest, the loved ones whom it is leaving, fall over it like heavenly dew which will leave in its heart the burning thirst of an unknown happiness. Then—with solemn oaths—*it promises* to remember—to remember the light when in the world of darkness, to remember truth when in the world of falsehood, and love when in the world of hatred. The return, the immortal crown, can only be acquired at this cost. It awakens in a dense atmosphere; ethereal constellation, diaphanous souls, oceans of light—all have disappeared. And now it is back on earth, in the abyss of birth and death. Nevertheless, it has not yet lost its celestial memory; the winged guide still visible to its eyes points out the woman who is to be its mother. The latter bears within her womb the germ of a child, but this germ will only live if the spirit comes in to animate it. Then for nine months is accomplished the most impenetrable mystery of earthly life, that of incarnation and maternity.

The mysterious fusion operates slowly but with perfect wisdom—organ by organ, fibre by fibre. Accordingly as the soul plunges into that warm cavern, which roars and swarms with life, in proportion as it feels itself caught up in the meander-

ings of the viscera with their thousand recesses and folds, the consciousness of its divine life becomes effaced and dies out. For between it and the light above are interposed waves of blood and tissues of flesh, crushing it and filling it with darkness. This distant light is already nothing more than a dying flicker. Finally, a terrible pang compresses it in a vice ; a bloody convulsion tears it from the mother soul and fastens it down into a throbbing, palpitating body. The child is born, a pitiful image of earth, and he cries aloud with fright. The memory of the celestial regions however has returned to the occult depths of the Unconscious ; it will only be revived either by Knowledge or by Pain, by Love or by Death !

Accordingly, the law of incarnation and disincarnation unfolds to us the real meaning of life and death. It constitutes the principal phase in the evolution of the soul, enabling us to follow it backwards and forwards right into the depths of nature and divinity. For this law reveals to us the rhythm and measure, the reason and object of the soul's immortality. From being abstract or fantastic, it makes it living and logical by showing the correspondences of life and death. Terrestrial birth is death from the spiritual point of view, and death is a celestial resurrection. The alternation of both

lives is necessary for the development of the soul, and each of them is at once the consequence and the explanation of the other. Whosoever is imbued with these truths is at the very heart of the mysteries, at the centre of initiation.

But, we shall be asked, what is there to prove for us the continuity of the soul, of the monad, the spiritual entity through all these existences, since it loses the memory of them in succession? What is there to prove, we shall reply, the identity of your person during waking existence and during sleep? You wake up every morning from a state as strange, as inexplicable as death; you rise from this condition of nothingness to return to it again at night. Was it nothingness? No, for you have been dreaming, and your dreams have been as real to you as the reality of the waking state. A change in the physiological conditions of the brain has modified the relations of soul and body and displaced your psychical point of view. You were the same individual but you found yourself in another environment, and living another existence. In magnetized subjects, somnambulists and clairvoyants, sleep develops new faculties which to us seem miraculous, though they are the natural faculties of the soul when detached from the body. Once aroused, these clairvoyants no longer remember

what they have seen, said or done during their lucid sleep, but they remember perfectly well in one sleep what happened in the previous one, and at times predict with mathematical certainty what will happen in the next. They have, then, two consciousnesses as it were, two alternate lives entirely distinct from one another, but each of which has its own rational continuity. They roll themselves round the same individuality like cords of different colours round an invisible thread.

Consequently, it is in a very deep sense that the initiate poets of old called sleep *the brother of death*. A veil of forgetfulness separates the sleeping from the waking state, like birth and death, and, just as our earthly life is divided into two parts always alternating, so also the soul, in the immensity of its cosmic evolution, alternates between incarnation and spiritual life, between earth and heaven. This alternate passage from one plane of the universe to another, this reversing of the poles of its being, is no less necessary for the development of the soul than alternate waking and sleeping is necessary for the bodily life of man. When passing from one existence to the other, we need the waters of Lethe. In this present existence, a salutary veil conceals from us past and future alike. But oblivion is not complete, since light passes through the veil. Innate

ideas alone prove a former existence. There is more, however ; we are born with a world of vague remembrances, mysterious impulses, divine presentiments. In children born of gentle, quiet parents we find outbursts of wild passions which atavism does not sufficiently explain, and which come from a former existence. Sometimes in the humblest life we find fidelity to a sentiment or an idea, altogether sublime and inexplicable. Is not this a result of the promises and oaths of the celestial life? The occult memory the soul has kept of them is stronger than all earthly reasoning. According as it attaches itself to this memory or abandons it, is it seen to overcome or to succumb. True faith consists in this mute fidelity of the soul to itself. For this reason, one may conceive that Pythagoras like all theosophists considered bodily life as a necessary elaboration of the will, and heavenly life as a spiritual growth, an accomplishment.

Lives follow without resembling one another, but a pitiless logic links them together. Though each of them has its own law and special destiny, the succession is controlled by a general law, which might be called *the repercussion of lives.*[1] In accordance with this law, the actions of one life

[1] The law called *Karma* by Brahmans and Buddhists.

have, fatally, their repercussion in the following one. Not only will man be born again with the instincts and faculties he has developed in his preceding incarnation, but the very manner of his existence will be largely determined by the good or bad use he has made of his liberty in the preceding life. There is no word or action which has not its echo in eternity, says a proverb. According to esoteric doctrine, this proverb is literally applied from one life to another. Pythagoras considered that the apparent injustice of destiny, the deformity and wretchedness of one's lot, misfortunes of every kind, find their explanation in the fact that each existence is the reward or the punishment of the former one. A criminal life engenders one of expiation ; an imperfect life, one of trial. A good life determines a mission ; a superior life, a perfected mission by the re-establishment of initiation and the spiritual selection of marriages. In this way races follow one another and humanity progresses. The initiates of old saw much further into the future than those of our days. They acknowledged that a time would come when the great mass of people constituting present-day humanity would pass on to another planet, there to begin a new cycle. In the series of cycles of which the planetary chain consists, the whole of humanity will

develop the intellectual, spiritual and transcendent principles which great initiates have developed in themselves in this life, and will thus bring them to general fruition. It goes without saying that such a development embraces not merely thousands, but millions of years, and that it will bring about changes in human conditions such as we cannot at present form any imagination of. In expressing them, Plato says that in those times the gods will really inhabit the temples of men. It is logical to admit that in the planetary chain, *i.e.* in the successive evolutions of our humanity on other planets, its incarnations should become more and more ethereal in their nature, insensibly approaching the purely spiritual state of that eighth sphere which is outside the circle of generation, and by which the divine state was denoted by theosophists of old. It is also natural that, as all do not start from the same point, and many loiter on the way or fall back, the number of the elect should continually diminish in this marvellous ascent. Our earth-limited intelligences are dazed by this conception, but heavenly intelligences contemplate it without the least fear, just as we regard a single life. Is not the evolution of souls, thus understood, in conformity with the unity of the Spirit, the principle of principles ; with the

homogeneity of Nature, the law of laws ; and with the continuity of movement, the force of forces ? Seen through the prism of spiritual life, a solar system does not constitute a material mechanism only, but a living organism, a celestial kingdom in which souls travel from world to world like the very breath of God animating it.

What then is the final end of man and humanity, according to esoteric doctrine ? After so many lives, deaths, re-births, periods of calm and poignant awakings, is there any limit to the labours of Psyche ? Yes, say the initiates when the soul has definitely conquered matter, when, developing all its spiritual faculties, it has found in itself the principle and end of all things, then, incarnation being no longer necessary, it will enter the divine state by a complete union with the divine intelligence. Since we have scarcely any presentiment of the spiritual life of the soul after each earthly life, how shall we form any idea of this perfect life which must follow the whole series of its spiritual existences ? This heaven of heavens will be to all former happiness as the ocean is to a river. In the mind of Pythagoras, the apotheosis of man was not a plunge into unconsciousness, but rather creative activity in supreme consciousness. The soul which has become pure

spirit does not lose its individuality, but rather perfects it as it rejoins its archetype in God. It remembers all its former existences, which it regards as so many ladders to reach the point at which it embraces and penetrates the universe. In this state, man is no longer man, as Pythagoras said, but demi-god. For in his entire being he reflects the ineffable light with which God fills immensity. For him, knowledge is power ; love is creation ; being is radiating truth and beauty.

Is this a definite limit ? Spiritual eternity has other measures than solar time, though it, too, has its stages, norms, and cycles. They entirely transcend human conception, however. Still, the law of progressive analogy in the ascending scale of nature allows of our affirming that the spirit, once it has reached this sublime state, can no longer return, that though the visible worlds change and pass away, the invisible world, which is its *raison d'être*, its source and basis, and of which the divine Psyche forms a part, is immortal.

It was in such a brilliant perspective that Pythagoras ended the history of the *divine Psyche*. The last word had died away on the lips of the sage, but the meaning of that incommunicable truth remained suspended in the motionless air of the crypt. Each listener believed that he had finished

the dream of lives, and was awaking to life in the mighty peace and boundless ocean of the one life. The naphtha lamps quietly lit up the statue of Persephone, standing there in the character of a heavenly reaper ; they revived her symbolical history in the sacred frescoes of the sanctuary. At times, a priestess who had entered a state of ecstasy under the harmonious voice of Pythagoras seemed to incarnate in her attitude and the radiance of her countenance the unspeakable beauty of the vision she saw. Then, the disciples—seized with a thrill of religious emotion—looked on in silence. Soon, however, the master, with a slow commanding gesture, brought back to earth the inspired prophetess. By degrees the tension of her features was relieved, she sank back into the arms of her companions and fell into a profound lethargy, from which she awoke troubled and sorrowful, and apparently exhausted after her heavenly flight.

Then, leaving the crypt they mounted to the gardens of Ceres just as morning was beginning to dawn over the sea, and the stars to disappear from mortal sight.

FOURTH DEGREE—EPIPHANY

The adept—The woman initiate—Love and marriage

With Pythagoras we have now reached the summit of initiation in ancient times. From these heights the earth appears drowned in shadow, like a dying star. Sidereal perspectives open out—and the vision from on high, the epiphany of the universe,[1] is unfolded before one's wondering gaze in its entirety. The object of his instruction, however, was not the absorption of man in contemplation or ecstasy. The master had brought his disciples into the immeasurable regions of the Kosmos, plunging them into the abyss of the invisible. After this terrifying journey, the true initiates were to return to earth better, stronger and more prepared for the trials of life.

The initiation of the intelligence was to be followed by that of the will, the most difficult of all. The disciple had now to become imbued with truth in the very depths of his being, to put it into prac-

[1] The *epiphany*, or vision from above; the *autopsy*, or direct vision; the *theophany*, or manifestation of God, are so many correlative ideas and divers expressions to indicate the state of perfection in which the initiate, having united his soul to God, contemplates truth in its entirety.

tice in everyday life. To attain to this ideal, one must, according to Pythagoras, unite three kinds of perfection: the realization of truth in intelligence, of virtue in soul and of purity in body. This latter was to be maintained by a prudent system of hygiene and a well-balanced chastity. This was demanded not as an end but as a means to an end. All bodily excesses leave marks, impurities, so to speak, in the astral body, the living organism of the soul, and consequently in the mind. For the astral body participates in all the acts of the physical body ; indeed, it is the former which gives effect to them, the material body being, without it, nothing but an inert mass. Accordingly the body must be pure for the soul to be pure also. Then the soul, continually enlightened by the intelligence, must acquire courage, self-denial, devotion and faith, in a word, virtue, by which a second nature must be made to replace the first. Finally, the intellect must reach wisdom through knowledge, so that in everything it may be able to distinguish good from evil and see God in the smallest of beings as well as in the immensity of worlds. On reaching these heights, man becomes an adept ; and, if he possesses sufficient energy, he enters into possession of new faculties and powers. The inner senses of the soul expand,

and the senses of the body are dominated by the radiant will. His bodily magnetism, penetrated by the potency of his astral soul, electrified by his will, acquires an apparently miraculous power. At times he cures the sick by the laying on of hands or simply by his presence. His look alone often penetrates the thoughts of men. Sometimes, in the waking state, he sees events taking place afar off.[1] He acts at a distance

[1] I will here mention two well-known facts of this kind, which are quite authentic. The first belongs to antiquity, its hero being the famous philosopher-magician, Apollonius of Tyana.

1. *Second sight of Apollonius of Tyana.*—"Whilst these things (the assassination of the Emperor Domitian) were taking place at Rome, Apollonius saw them at Ephesus. Domitian was assailed by Clement about noon; on the very same day, at that moment, Apollonius was discoursing in the gardens close to the Xystes. Suddenly he lowered his voice as though smitten with sudden terror. He continued his speech, but his language was of a different character, as is the case often with those who are speaking or thinking of something else. Then he stopped, as though he had lost the thread of his argument, gave a terrified look on the ground, took three or four steps forward and exclaimed: 'Strike the tyrant!' One would have said that he saw, not the image of the deed in a mirror, but the deed itself in all its reality. The Ephesians (for the whole of Ephesus was present at the speech of Apollonius) were struck with wonder. Apollonius stopped like a man waiting to see the result of some doubtful event. Finally he exclaimed: 'Be of good courage, Ephesians, the tyrant has been killed to-day. To-day? Yes, by Minerva! He was being assassinated the very moment I interrupted my speech. The Ephesians thought that Apollonius had lost his senses; it was their keen desire that he should have said what was true, but they were afraid that some danger might come to them as the result of this speech. . . . Soon, however, messengers came bringing

by the concentration of thought and will on such persons as are attached to him by bonds of personal

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the good news and testifying in favour of the knowledge of Apollonius, for every detail: the murder of the tyrant, the day of its consummation, the hour of noon, the instigator of the murder whom Apollonius had encouraged, were found to be in perfect conformity with those the Gods had shown him on the day of his discourse to the Ephesians."—*Life of Apollonius*, by Philostratus.

2. *Second sight of Swedenborg.*—The second fact refers to the greatest seer of modern times. The objective reality of Swedenborg's visions may be discussed, but there can be no doubt regarding his second sight, which has been attested by a multitude of facts. Swedenborg's vision of the burning of Stockholm, a distance of ninety miles away, caused much wonderment in the second half of the eighteenth century. Kant, the well-known German philosopher, caused an inquiry to be made by a friend living at Gothenburg, in Sweden; the following is his account as related to a lady friend:—

"In my opinion the following fact is of the greatest demonstrative importance, and ought to do away with any kind of doubt. In 1759, M. de Swedenborg, one Saturday about four in the afternoon, about the end of December, landed at Gothenburg, after a journey to England. M. William Castel invited him to his house, where a company of fifteen persons was present. At six o'clock in the evening, M. de Swedenborg, who had left the room, returned, with a look of consternation on his pallid face, and said that 'at that very moment a fire had burst out in Stockholm, at the Sudermalm, and was rapidly spreading its ravages in the direction of his own home. . . . He said that the house of one of his friends, whom he named, was in ashes, and that his own was in danger. At eight o'clock, again leaving the room, he returned and said joyfully: 'Thank God! The fire has been extinguished at the third door from my own house.' That very evening the governor was informed of the fact. On Sunday morning, Swedenborg was summoned before this functionary, who questioned him on the matter. Swedenborg gave an exact description of the fire, its beginning and end, and the time

sympathy, causing his image to appear to them as though his astral body could be transported out of his material body. The appearance of the dying or the dead to their friends affords exactly the same phenomenon. The apparition however which the dying man or the soul of the dead man generally produces through an unconscious desire, in the last few moments of life or in the second death, is generally produced by the adept when in perfect health and consciousness. Still, he can only do this during sleep, and a sleep which is almost always of a lethargic nature. Finally, the adept feels himself as it were surrounded and protected by invisible beings, superior spirits of light, who lend him their strength and aid him in his mission.

Adepts are rare, but even more rare are those

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it had lasted. The same day, the news spread throughout the town, which was all the more excited as the governor had manifested interest in it, and many people were anxious about their property and friends. On Monday evening there arrrived in Gothenburg a courier whom the business men of Stockholm had despatched during the conflagration. Among the letters the fire was described in exactly the manner above mentioned. What can be alleged against the authenticity of this event? The friend who wrote to me has examined the whole affair, not only in Stockholm, but, about two months ago, at Gothenburg also; he is well acquainted with the best-known families, and has been able to obtain complete information in a town where there are still living the majority of the eye-witnesses, considering the short lapse of time (nine years) since 1759."—Letter to Mademoiselle Charlotte de Knoblich, quoted by Matter, in his *Life of Swedenborg*.

who attain to this power. Greece knew but three: Orpheus at the dawn of Hellenism, Pythagoras at its apogee, and Apollonius of Tyana in its final decline. Orpheus was the mighty and inspired initiator of Greek religion; Pythagoras, the organizer of esoteric science and the philosophy of the schools; Apollonius, the moralizing stoic and popular magician of the decadence. In all three, however, in spite of differences and degrees, there beams the divine ray, the mind passionately inflamed for the salvation of souls, indomitable energy clothed in gentleness and serenity. But do not draw too near these mighty, calm brows; a silent fire is beneath, the furnace of an ardent but ever restrained will.

Pythagoras accordingly represents to us an adept of the highest type, possessed of the scientific mind and cast in philosophic mould to which the spirit of modern times most nearly approaches. But he himself neither could, nor pretended to make perfect adepts of his disciples. A great inspirer is always at the beginning of every great epoch. His disciples and their pupils form the magnetic chain which carries his thought out into the world. In the fourth degree of initiation, Pythagoras therefore contented himself with teaching his followers how to apply his

doctrine to life. The *Epiphany*, the vision from above, set forth an ensemble of profound, regenerating views on things of earth.

The origin of good and evil remains an incomprehensible mystery for whomsoever has not taken into account the origin and the end of things. A morality which does not consider the final destiny of man will be merely utilitarian and very imperfect. Besides, human liberty does not really exist for such as always feel themselves the slaves of their passions, nor does it by right exist for such as believe neither in the soul nor in God, for whom life is a lightning flash between two states of darkness. The first live in the servitude of the soul, enchained by the passions ; the latter in the slavery of intelligence limited to the physical world. It is not so for the religious man, or for the true philosopher, nor with much greater reason for the theosophist initiate who realizes truth in the trinity of his being and the unity of his will. To understand the origin of good and evil, the initiate regards *the three worlds* with the spiritual eye. He sees the murky world of matter and animalism in which inevitable *Destiny* holds sway. He sees the luminous world of the Spirit which, for us, is the invisible world, the immense hierarchy of liberated souls who are themselves *Providence* in action, the

world where divine law reigns. Between the two he catches a dim glimpse of humanity, the lower elements of which plunge into the natural world whilst the higher ones touch the divine spheres. The genius and spirit of humanity is *Liberty;* for the moment man perceives truth and error, he is free to choose, to associate with Providence in accomplishing truth, or, by following error, to fall beneath the law of destiny. The art of will joined to that of intelligence is nothing but a mathematical point, but from this point springs forth the spiritual universe. Every spirit partially feels by instinct what the theosophist totally understands by his intellect: that Evil is what causes man to descend to the fatality of matter, and that Good is what makes him rise towards the divine law of the Spirit. His true destiny is to be ever rising higher, and that from his own efforts. But to do this he must also be free to descend again to the very lowest. The circle of liberty widens out to the infinitely great in proportion as one ascends, it shrinks to the infinitely small in proportion as one descends. The higher one rises, the freer he becomes ; for the more one enters into light, the more power for good he acquires. And the more one descends, the more enslaved does he become ; for each fall into evil diminishes the intelligence of

the true and the capacity for good. Destiny accordingly reigns over the past, Liberty over the future, and Providence over both, *i.e.* over the ever-existing present, which may be called Eternity.[1] From the combined action of Destiny, Liberty and Providence spring the innumerable destinies, the hells and the paradises of souls. Evil, being discord with divine law, is not the work of God but that of man, and has only a relative, an apparent and transitory existence. Good, being accord with divine law, alone really and eternally exists. Neither the priests of Delphi and Eleusis, nor the initiate philosophers would ever reveal these profound thoughts to the people, who might have misunderstood and misused them. In the Mysteries this doctrine was symbolically represented by the mutilation of Dionysos, though what was called *the sufferings of God* was hidden from the profane by an impenetrable veil.

The greatest of all religious and philosophical discussions deal with the question of the origin of Good and Evil. We have just seen that esoteric

[1] This idea springs logically from the human and divine ternary, from the trinity of the microcosm and the macrocosm we have spoken of in the previous chapters. The metaphysical correlation of Destiny, Liberty and Providence has been admirably drawn by Fabre d'Olivert, in his commentary on the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras.*

teachings hold the key to this question. There is another important question on which the social and political problem depends: *the inequality of human conditions.* In the very spectacle of evil and pain there is something terrifying. Their apparently arbitrary and unjust distribution may be said to be the origin of all hatred, revolt and denial. Here again the profound esoteric teaching brings into our earthly darkness its sovereign light of peace and hope. The diversity of souls, conditions and destinies can indeed only be justified by plurality of existences and the doctrine of reincarnation. If man is born for the first time into this life, what explanation can be given of the innumerable evils which seem to fall on him as the effect of chance? How can it be admitted that there is such a thing as eternal justice, when some are born under conditions which fatally bring about misery and humiliation, whilst others are born fortunate and live the happiest of lives? If, however, it is true that we have lived other lives, and shall do so again after death, that through all these existences there reigns the law of recurrence and repercussion —then the differences of soul, of condition and destiny, will be nothing but the results of previous lives and the manifold applications of this law. Differences of condition spring from an unequal

employment of liberty in past lives, and intellectual differences from the fact that men belong to extremely different degrees of evolution, which range from the semi-animal condition of retrogressing races to the angelic states of saints and the divine kingship of genius. In reality earth resembles a vessel, and all we who inhabit it are travellers coming from far-away lands, dispersing, by degrees, in every direction of the compass. The doctrine of reincarnation gives a *raison d'etre*, in accordance with eternal justice and logic, for the most terrible suffering as well as for the most envied happiness. The idiot will now be understood by us if we think that his dull, stupid condition, of which he is half conscious and from which he suffers, is the punishment for a criminal use of his intelligence in another life. All the degrees of physical and moral suffering, of happiness and misfortune in their innumerable varieties, will appear to us as the natural and wisely-graduated blossomings of the instincts and actions, the faults and virtues of a long past, for in its occult depths the soul retains everything it accumulates in its divers existences. According to hour and influence, the former births reappear and disappear, and destiny, or rather the spirits who control it, proportion the soul's kind of reincarnation to its

degree and quality. Lysis expresses this truth, beneath a veil, in the *Golden Verses*—

> "Thou wilt likewise know, that men draw upon themselves their own misfortunes voluntarily, and of their own free choice. Unhappy that they are! They neither see nor understand that their good is near them."

Far from weakening the sentiment of brotherhood and of the solidarity of all men, such teaching is bound to strengthen it. We owe help, sympathy and charity to all; for we are all of the same race, though we have reached different stages. All suffering is sacred, for pain is the test of the soul. All sympathy is divine, for it enables us to feel, as by a magnetic thrill, the invisible chain binding together all the worlds. The virtue of grief is the reason of genius. Sages and saints, prophets and divine creators shine with more resplendent beauty in the eyes of those who know that they too come forth from universal evolution. How many lives, what innumerable victories have been needed to acquire this might which fills us with wonder? What heavens have already been traversed to bring to us this innate light of genius? We know not; but these lives have been lived,

these heavens do exist. The conscience of nations is not mistaken ; the prophets have not lied in calling these men the sons of God, messengers from heavenly places. Their mission is demanded by eternal Truth, they are protected by invisible legions and the living Word speaks in them !

There is one difference in men springing from the primitive essence of individuals, and another, as we have just said, coming from the degree of spiritual evolution to which they have attained. From this latter point of view, we see that men may be placed in four classes, comprising every subdivision and degree.

1. In the great majority of men, the will acts especially in the body. These may be designated as *instinctive* persons. Their sphere includes not only physical work, but also the exercise and development of the intelligence in the physical world, consequently commerce and industry.

2. In the second degree of human development the will, and consequently the consciousness, has its abode in the soul, *i.e.* in sensitiveness, reacted on by intelligence, which constitutes understanding. These are *animic, or passionate persons.* According to temperament, they are fitted to become warriors, artists or poets. The great majority of savants and literary men belong to

this class. They live in relative ideas, modified by passions or limited by a fixed horizon, without rising to the height of pure Idea or Universality.

3. In a third class of men, a far rarer one, the will has acquired the habit of acting principally in pure intellect, of setting free the intelligence, in its special function, from the tyranny of the passions and of the limits of matter, thus giving all their conceptions a character of universality. These are the *intellectual* persons. They include such heroes as perish in martyrdom for their country, the highest type of poets, and especially true philosophers and sages, those whose mission it is, according to Pythagoras and Plato, to govern humanity. In these men, passion is not extinct ; for without it nothing could be effected ; it constitutes fire and electricity in the moral world. The passions have here become the servants of intelligence, whilst in the former category intelligence is, oftener than not, the slave of the passions.

4. The loftiest human ideal is realized by a fourth class of men, those who have added to the dominion of the intelligence over soul and instinct, that of the will over their whole being. They exercise supreme mastery through the control and possession of all their faculties. In the human

trinity they have realized unity. Owing to this marvellous concentration, which collects together all the powers of life, their will, by projecting itself into others, acquires an almost limitless strength, a radiating and creative magic. These men have borne different names in history. They are primordial men, *adepts, great initiates,* sublime geniuses, who transform and metamorphose humanity. So rare are they that they may be counted in history; Providence scatters them here and there at long intervals of time, like stars in the heavens.[1]

Evidently this last category is outside of all rule or classification, still, such a constitution of human society as takes no account of the first three categories, without granting each its normal function and the means needed for self-development, is merely external, it is anything but *organic.* It is clear that, in primitive times, probably dating back to the Vedic epoch, the Brahmans of India founded the divisions of society into castes on the ternary principle. In time, however, this division, so just and fruitful a one, became changed into an

[1] This classing of men corresponds to the four stages of Pythagorean initiation, and forms the basis of all initiations, even that of the primitive freemasons, who were not without a smattering of esoteric teaching.—See Fabre d'Olivert, *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore.*

aristocratic and sacerdotal privilege. The principle of vocation and initiation was replaced by that of heredity. The closed castes finally became petrified and the irretrievable decadence of India followed. Egypt, which maintained, during the rule of the Pharaohs, the ternary constitution with the movable and open castes, the principle of initiation as applied to the priesthood and that of examination and control of all military and civil functions, existed for a period ranging between five and six thousand years without a change of constitution. As for Greece, her lively, versatile temperament caused her to pass rapidly from aristocracy to democracy, and from the latter to tyranny. She turned round in this vicious circle like a sick man passing from fever to lethargy and back again to fever. Perhaps she needed this excitement to produce her unparalleled work: the translation of the profound though obscure wisdom of the East into clear, universal language; the creation of the Beautiful by Art; and the foundation of an open and reasonable science following on a secret, intuitive initiation. And none the less was she indebted to the principle of initiation for her religious organization and her loftiest inspirations. Speaking from a social and political standpoint, it may be said that she always lived in whatever

was provisional and excessive. Pythagoras, in his capacity as an adept, had well understood, from the heights of initiation, the eternal principles which control society, and was following out the plan of a mighty reform in accordance with these truths. Soon we shall see how his school and himself suffered shipwreck in the storms of democracy.

From the pure, undefiled summits of his teaching the life of the worlds rolls on, in accordance with the rhythm of Eternity. Glorious epiphany! Beneath the magic rays, however, of the unveiled firmament, earth, humanity and life also unfold to us their secret depths. To feel the presence of God, the infinitely great must be recognized in the infinitely small. This is what the disciples of Pythagoras experienced when, to crown his teaching, the master demonstrated to them how eternal Truth is manifested in the union of man and woman in marriage. The beauty of the sacred numbers they had heard and contemplated in the Infinite they were about to recognize at the very heart of life, for them God was reflected in the great mystery of Sex and Love.

Antiquity had grasped an important truth which succeeding ages have too long misunderstood. Woman, effectively to fulfil her duties as wife and mother, needs special instruction and initia-

tion. Hence a purely feminine initiation ; that is to say, one reserved altogether for women. This existed in India, where in Vedic times the woman was a priestess at the domestic altar. In Egypt it dates back to the mysteries of Isis. Orpheus organized this initiation in Greece. Right on to the decay of paganism we see it flourishing in the Dionysiac mysteries as well as in the temples of Juno, Diana, Minerva and Ceres. It consisted of symbolic rites and ceremonies, in festivals by night as well as in special instruction given by aged priestesses or by the high priest, and dealing with the most private concerns of married life. Advice and regulations were given regarding the relations between the sexes, the times of the year and month favourable for healthy conception. The highest importance was attached to the physical and moral hygiene of woman during pregnancy, so that the sacred work, the creation of the child, might be accomplished in accordance with divine law. In a word, the science of conjugal life and the art of maternity were taught. The latter extended to some years after the birth of the child. Up to the age of seven, the children remained in the gynaeceum—which the husband never entered—under the mother's exclusive control. The wisdom of antiquity looked upon the child as being a delicate

plant, which, if it is to be kept from wasting away, needs the warm, cheering atmosphere of a mother's love. The father would stunt its growth, a mother's kiss and embrace are needed to enable it to blossom forth; a woman's mighty encircling love to protect from outside attack this soul which a new life fills with terror and dismay. It is because woman consciously fulfilled these lofty functions which antiquity regarded as divine, that she was in very truth the priestess of the family, the guardian of the sacred fire of life, the Vesta of the hearth. Feminine initiation may accordingly be regarded as the veritable reason of the beauty of the race, its robust descendants and the length of duration of the family in Greek and Roman antiquity.[1]

In establishing a section for women in his Institute, Pythagoras merely deepened and refined what already existed. The women he initiated received from him, along with rites and precepts, the final principles of their functions. In this way he bestowed the consciousness of their *rôle* on such as were deserving of it. He revealed to them the transfiguration of love in perfect marriage, which

[1] Montesquieu and Michelet are almost the only writers who have made mention of the virtue of Greek wives. Neither of them states its cause, which I point out in these few lines.

is the blending of two souls at the very centre of life and truth. Is not man in his strength the representative of the creative spirit and principle? And does not woman in the totality of her power personify nature in its plastic force, its wonderful realizations, at once terrestrial and divine? Then if these two beings succeed in a complete mingling of body, soul and spirit, they will form between them an epitome of the universe. To believe in God, however, woman needs to see him living in man; and to effect this, man must be an initiate. He alone, by reason of his profound knowledge of life and creative will-power, is capable of fecundating the feminine soul, of transforming it by means of his divine ideal. This ideal the loved one gives him back manifold in her vibrating thoughts, her keen sensations and profound divinations. She sends him back his image transfigured by enthusiasm, she *becomes* his ideal, for she realizes it by the power of love in her own soul. Through her he becomes living and visible, he is made flesh and blood. For if man creates through desire and will, woman, both physically and spiritually, brings into being through love.

In her *rôle* as lover or wife or mother or being inspired, she is no less great and is even more divine than man. For love is self-forgetfulness.

The woman who forgets self and loses herself in her love must ever be sublime. In such self-abasement she finds her celestial re-birth, her crown of light and the immortal radiance of her entire being.

In modern literature love has been reigning as a master for the past two centuries. This is not the purely sensual love, born of bodily beauty, as in the poetry of old, nor is it the insipid worship of an abstract and conventional ideal as in the middle ages; it is rather a love both sensual and psychic which gives full scope to its liberty and individual fancy. Oftener than not both sexes wage war in love itself. There is the revolt of the woman against man's egoism and brutality; the scorn of the man at woman's deceit and vanity, carnal exclamations and the ineffectual wrath of the victims to voluptuousness, the slaves to debauchery. With all this we find deep-rooted passions and terrible attractions, all the more powerful from being trammelled and fettered by worldly conventions and social institutions. Hence a love full of passion and storm, of moral ruin and tragic catastrophe, on which the modern novel and drama are almost exclusively based. One might say that tired man, finding God neither in religion nor in science, in despair seeks for

him in woman. And he does well, but it is only through the initiation of the great truths that he will find Him in Her and Her in Him. In these souls, which know neither themselves nor one another, which sometimes leave one another with mutual maledictions, there is, as it were, a mighty desire for self-penetration, for finding in such intermingling a happiness that is impossible. In spite of the aberrations, the outbursts of debauchery resulting therefrom, this desperate search is necessary; it springs from an unconscious divinity. It will be a vital element in the reconstruction of the future. For when man and woman have found themselves and one another through the channels of profound love and initiation, the fusion of the two will be the radiating and creative force *par excellence.*

It is only quite recently, then, that psychic love, the soul's love-passion, has entered into literature and through it into universal consciousness. It has its origin, however, in the initiation of the past. The reason Greek literature scarcely mentions it, is that it was a most rare exception. Another reason may be found in the profound secrecy of the mysteries. And yet religious and philosophic tradition have handed down traces of the woman initiate. Away behind official poetry

and philosophy appear a few half-veiled though luminous woman forms. We have already mentioned Theoclea who inspired Pythagoras; later on will come Corinna, the priestess, ofttimes the fortunate rival of Pindar, who himself was the greatest initiate among the Greek lyric poets; finally, the mysterious Diotima appeared at the banquet of Plato to give the supreme revelation of Love. By the side of these exceptional *rôles* the Greek woman exercised her veritable priesthood at the fireside and in the gynaeceum. Indeed, she created those heroes, artists and poets whose sublime deeds, sculptures and songs we so greatly admire. It was she who conceived them in the mystery of love, who formed them in her womb with the desire and love of beauty, who brought them to birth after protecting them beneath her motherly wings. It must be added that for the man and woman who are real initiates the creation of the child has an infinitely finer signification and greater importance than for us. When father and mother know that the soul of the child existed previous to its birth on earth, conception becomes a sacred act, the summons of a soul to submit to incarnation. Between the incarnate soul and the mother there is almost always considerable similarity. Just as evil-minded and wicked women

attract spirits possessed of demons, divine spirits are attracted to gentle tender-hearted mothers. Is not this invisible soul, long waited for, which is to come and finally appears—so wonderfully and yet so surely—something divine in its nature? Painful will be its birth and imprisonment in flesh. For though a dense veil gathers between itself and the heaven it has left, though it no longer remembers—alas! it suffers none the less on that account! Sacred and divine is the task of the mother who is to create for it a fresh dwelling, to mitigate the harshness of its prison and render the trial easier to bear.

Thus we see that the teaching of Pythagoras, which had begun by the divine trinity in the profound recesses of the Absolute, ended in the human trinity at the centre of life. In Father, Mother and Child, the initiate could now recognize the Spirit, Soul and Heart of the living universe. For him this final initiation constituted the foundation of the social work, conceived of in all the height and beauty of the ideal, a building to whose construction each initiate had to bring his stone.

CHAPTER V

THE MARRIAGE OF PYTHAGORAS—REVOLUTION AT CROTON—THE MASTER'S END—THE SCHOOL AND ITS DESTINY

AMONG the women who followed the master's teaching was a maiden of great beauty. Her father, an inhabitant of Croton, was named Brontinos. His daughter's name was Theano. Pythagoras was now sixty years of age, but mastery over passion and a pure life wholly consecrated to his mission, had kept him in perfect health and strength. The youth of the soul, that immortal flame the great initiate draws from his spiritual life and nourishes on the hidden forces of nature, shone forth in him, throwing into subjection all around. The Grecian mage was not at the decline, but rather at the height of his might. Theano was attracted to Pythagoras by the almost supernatural radiance emanating from his person. Grave and reserved, she had sought from the master an explanation of the mysteries she loved though without understanding them. When, how-

ever, beneath the light of truth and the tender glow which gradually enveloped her, she felt her inmost soul expand like the mystic rose with its thousand petals, when she felt that this blossoming forth came from him and his words—she silently conceived for the master a boundless enthusiasm and a passionate love.

Pythagoras had made no effort to attract her. His love and affection were bestowed on all his disciples ; he thought only of his school, of Greece and the future of the world. Like many great adepts, he had denied himself the pleasures of earthly love to devote himself to his work. The magic of his will, the spiritual possession of so many souls he had formed and who remained devoted to him as to a well-loved father, the mystic incense of all those unexpressed affections which came to him, and that exquisite fragrance of human sympathy which bound together the Pythagorean brethren—all this took the place of voluptuousness, of human happiness and love. One day, as he was alone, meditating on the future of his school in the crypt of Proserpine, he saw coming to him, with grave, resolute steps, this beautiful virgin to whom he had never spoken in private. She sank on her knees at his feet, and with downcast eyes begged the master—the one

who could do everything!—to set her free from an impossible, an unhappy love which was consuming her, body and soul. Pythagoras wished to know the name of the one she loved. After much hesitation, Theano confessed that it was himself, but that, ready for any sacrifice, she would submit to his will. Pythagoras made no reply. Encouraged by his silence, she raised her head with suppliant look. Her eyes seemed to contain the very essence of a life and soul offered as a sacrifice to the master.

The sage was greatly disturbed ; he could overcome his senses and imagination, but the electric flash from that soul had pierced his own. In this virgin, matured by passion, her countenance transfigured by a sentiment of utter devotion, he had found his companion, and caught a faint glimpse of a more complete realization of his work. With troubled look, Pythagoras raised the maiden to her feet, and Theano saw from the master's eyes that their destinies were for ever united.

By his marriage with Theano, Pythagoras affixed *the seal of realization* to his work. The union and fusion of the two lives was complete. One day when the master's wife was asked what length of time elapsed before a woman could

become pure after intercourse with a man, she replied: "If it is with her husband, she is pure all the time; if with another man, she is never pure." Many women would smilingly remark that to give such a reply one must be the wife of Pythagoras, and love him as Theano did.

And they would be in the right, for it is not marriage which sanctifies love, it is love which justifies marriage. Theano entered so thoroughly into the thought and life of her husband, that after his death she became a centre for the Pythagorean order, and a Greek author quotes her opinion as that of an authority on the doctrine of Numbers. She bore Pythagoras two sons, Arimnestes and Telauges, and a daughter Damo. At a later date Telauges became the master of Empedocles, to whom he handed down the secrets of the doctrine.

The family of Pythagoras offered the order a real model to follow. His house was called the Temple of Ceres, and his court the Temple of the Muses. In domestic and religious festivals, the mother led the women's chorus, and Damo that of the maidens. In all respects Damo was worthy of her parents. Pythagoras entrusted to her certain writings expressly forbidding her to communicate them to any one outside the family. After

the dispersion of the Pythagoreans, Damo fell into great poverty. She was offered a large sum for the precious manuscript, but, faithful to her father's will, she always refused to part with it.

Pythagoras lived in Croton for thirty years. Within twenty years this extraordinary man had acquired such power that those who called him a demi-god were not looked upon as exaggerating. This power seemed to have something miraculous about it, no like influence had ever been exercised by a philosopher. It extended not merely to the school of Croton and its ramifications in other towns on the coast of Italy, but even to the politics of all these small states. Pythagoras was a reformer in the whole acceptation of the term. Croton, a colony of Achaïa, had an aristocratic constitution. The *Council of the Thousand*, drawn from the noblest families, carried on the legislative and kept watch over the executive power. Popular assemblies existed, though their power was restricted. Pythagoras, who wished the State to be all order and harmony, was no more enamoured of oligarchical compression than of the chaos of demagogy. Accepting the Doric constitution as it was, he simply tried to introduce a fresh mechanism into it. The idea was a bold one, for it consisted in the creation, over and above the

political power, of a scientific one with a deliberative and consultative voice in questions of vital interest, and becoming the key-stone, the supreme regulator of the State. Above the Council of the Thousand, he organized the *Council of the Three Hundred,* chosen by the former, but recruited from among the initiates alone. The number was sufficient for the task. Porphyrus relates that two thousand of the citizens of Croton gave up their wonted mode of living and united in order to live together with their wives and children after placing their possessions in one common stock. It was thus the wish of Pythagoras that at the head of the State there should be a scientific government, not so mysterious though quite as important as the Egyptian priesthood. What he realized for a short time remained the dream of all such initiates as dealt with politics, viz. the introduction of the principle of initiation and examination into the government of the State, and the reconciliation in this superior synthesis of the elective or democratic principle with a government constituted of a select number of intelligent and virtuous citizens. The result was that the Council of the Three Hundred formed a kind of political, scientific and religious order, of which Pythagoras himself was the recognized head. The members were

bound to him by a solemn and an awful oath of absolute secrecy, as was the case in the Mysteries. These societies or ἑταιρεῖαι spread from Croton, the seat of the original society, throughout almost the whole of the towns in Greater Greece, where they exercised a powerful political influence. The Pythagorean order also tended to become the head of the State throughout the whole of Southern Italy. Its ramifications extended to Tarentum, Heracleium, Metapontum, Rhegium, Himera, Catana, Agrigentum, Sybaris and, according to Aristoxenes, even among the Etruscans. As regards the influence of Pythagoras on the government of these rich and mighty cities, nothing loftier, nothing more liberal or pacific could be imagined. Wherever he appeared, order, justice and concord were restored. Once, when summoned into the presence of a tyrant of Sicily, he persuaded him, by his eloquence alone, to restore the wealth he had unjustly acquired and to abdicate a power he had usurped. Such towns as were subject to one another he made independent and free. So beneficent were his actions that when he went into a town the inhabitants would say: "He has not come to teach but rather to heal."

The sovereign influence of a great mind and

character, that magic of soul and intelligence, arouses jealousy and hatred which is only the more terrible and violent because it is itself the less capable of attack. His sway lasted a quarter of a century; the reaction came when the indefatigable adept had reached the age of ninety. It began in Sybaris, the rival of Croton, where a rising of the people took place and the aristocratic party was overthrown. Five hundred exiles asked the inhabitants of Croton to receive them, but the Sybarites demanded their extradition. Dreading the anger of a hostile town, the magistrates of Croton were on the point of complying with this demand when Pythagoras intervened. At his entreaty, they refused to hand over the unhappy suppliants to their implacable enemies, whereupon Sybaris declared war upon Croton. The Croton army, however, commanded by the famous athlete, Milon, a disciple of Pythagoras, completely defeated the Sybarites. The downfall of Sybaris followed; the town was taken and plundered, utterly destroyed and converted into a wilderness of ruins. It is impossible to admit that Pythagoras could have approved of so terrible a revenge, which was altogether opposed to his principles, as, indeed, to those of all initiates. Neither he nor Milon, however, could check the

unbridled passions of a conquering army, when once inflamed by long-standing jealousy and excited by an unjust attack.

Revenge, whether in individuals or in nations, always brings about a recoil of the passions let loose. The Nemesis of this vengeance was a terrible one ; its consequences fell on Pythagoras and the whole of his order. After taking Sybaris, the people demanded a division of the land. Not content with obtaining this, the democratic party proposed a change of constitution, depriving the Council of the Thousand of its privileges, and suppressing the Council of the Three Hundred ; they were no longer willing to admit any other authority than universal suffrage. Naturally the Pythagoreans, members of the Council of the Thousand, were opposed to a reform which was contrary to their principles and was undermining the patient work of their master. They had already become the object of that dull hatred which mystery and superiority ever arouse in the masses. Their political attitude excited the anger of the demagogy, and personal hatred against the master proved the spark which kindled the fire.

A certain Cylon had, some time before this, offered himself as a candidate for the School. Pythagoras, who was very strict in accepting

disciples, refused him because of his violent and headstrong disposition. This rejected candidate became a bitter enemy. When public opinion began to turn against Pythagoras he organized a club, a large popular society in opposition to that of the Pythagoreans. He succeeded in attracting to himself the principal leaders of the people, and at the meetings hatched a revolution which was to begin by the expulsion of the Pythagoreans. Cylon rose to his feet in front of a sea of upturned excited faces and read extracts stolen from the secret book of Pythagoras, entitled: The Sacred Word (*hieros logos*). These extracts were then travestied and wrongly interpreted. A few of the speakers made an attempt to defend the Brothers of Silence, who respected even dumb animals. Such were greeted with outbursts of laughter. Cylon ascended the tribune again and again. He demonstrated that the religious catechism of the Pythagoreans was a crime against liberty. "And that is a slight charge," he added. "Is this master, this would-be demi-god, whose least word is blindly obeyed, and who has merely a command to give, to have all his brethren exclaiming: 'The master has said it!'—any other than the tyrant of Croton, and the worst of all tyrants, an occult one? What else than scorn and disdain for the people is this

indissoluble friendship which unites all the members of the Pythagorean ἑταιρεῖαι composed of? They are never tired of repeating the words of Homer when he says that the prince should be the shepherd of his people. In their eyes the people are evidently nothing better than a worthless flock. The very existence of the order, I say, is a permanent conspiracy against the rights of the people. Until it is destroyed liberty will be a vain word in Croton!" One of the members of the meeting, animated by a feeling of loyalty, exclaimed: "Let Pythagoras and his followers be given an opportunity, at any rate, to justify their conduct in our presence before we condemn them." Cylon replied haughtily: "Have not these Pythagoreans deprived you of the right to judge and decide upon public matters? What right have they to ask you to listen to them now? They did not consult you when they deprived you of the right to exercise justice, now it is your turn to strike without listening to them!" Such vehement opinions were greeted with rounds of applause, and popular frenzy and passion rose higher than ever.

One evening, when forty of the principal members of the order had met at the abode of Milon, the tribune collected his followers and the

house was surrounded. The Pythagoreans, who had the master with them, barricaded the doors. The enraged crowd set fire to the building, which speedily became enveloped in flames. Thirty-eight Pythagoreans, the very first of the master's disciples and constituting the flower of the order, along with Pythagoras himself, perished either in the flames or at the hands of the people. Archippus and Lysis alone escaped massacre.[1]

Thus died this mighty sage, this divine man whose effort it had been to instil his own wisdom into human rule and government. The murder of the Pythagoreans was the signal for a democratic revolution in Croton and about the Gulf of Tarentum. The towns of Italy expelled from their walls

[1] This is the version of Diogenes of Laërte regarding the death of Pythagoras—according to Dicearchus, quoted by Porphyry, the master escaped massacre, along with Archippus and Lysis. He wandered from town to town until he reached Metapontum, where he died of hunger in the Temple of the Muses. The inhabitants of Metapontum, on the other hand, affirmed that the sage they had taken in, died peacefully in their city. They pointed out to Cicero his house, seat and tomb. It is noteworthy that, long after the master's death, those cities which had persecuted Pythagoras most, at the time of the democratic change of opinion, claimed for themselves the honour of having offered him refuge and protection. The towns around the Gulf of Tarentum claimed that they each contained the ashes of the philosopher with as much desperation as the towns of Ionia disputed among one another the honour of having given birth to Homer.—See this question discussed in M. Chaignet's conscientious work: *Pythagore et la philosophie pythagoricienne.*

the unfortunate disciples of the master. The order was dispersed; fragments of it, however, spread throughout Sicily and Greece, propagating everywhere the master's words and teachings. Lysis became the teacher of Epaminondas. After fresh revolutions, the Pythagoreans were permitted to return to Italy on condition they no longer formed a political body. They were still united in a touching fraternity, and looked upon themselves as one family. One of them who had fallen upon sickness and poverty was kindly taken in by an inn-keeper. Before dying he traced a few mysterious signs on the door of the inn and said to the host: "Do not be uneasy, one of my brothers will pay my debt." A year afterwards, as a stranger was passing by this inn he saw the signs and said to the host: "I am a Pythagorean; one of my brothers died here; tell me what I owe you on his account." The order existed for two hundred and fifty years; the ideas and traditions of the master have come down to the present times.

The regenerating influence of Pythagoras over Greece was immense. This influence was exercised in mysterious though certain fashion, by means of the temples he had visited. At Delphi we have seen that he gave new might to the science of divination, strengthened the priestly influence, and by

his art formed a model Pythoness. Thanks to this inner reform, which aroused enthusiasm in the very heart of the sanctuaries and in the soul of the initiates, Delphi became more than ever the moral centre of Greece. This was especially evident during the Median wars. Scarcely had thirty years elapsed since the death of Pythagoras when the Asiatic cyclone, predicted by the Samian sage, burst out upon the coasts of Hellas. In this epic struggle of Europe against a barbaric Asia, Greece, representing liberty and civilization, had behind her the science and genius of Apollo. He it is whose patriotic and religious inspiration stirred up and silenced the springing rivalry between Sparta and Athens. It is he, too, who was the inspirer of men like Miltiades and Themistocles. At Marathon, enthusiasm was so great that the Athenians believed they saw two warriors, clad in light, fighting in their ranks. Some recognized in them Theseus and Echetos ; others, Castor and Pollux. When the invasion of Xerxes, tenfold more formidable than that of Darius, broke over Thermopylæ and submerged Hellas, it was the Pythoness who, on her tripod, pointed out the way of safety to the envoys from Athens, and helped Themistocles to gain the victory at Salamis. The pages of Herodotus thrill with her broken phrases: "Abandon the home-

steads and lofty hills if the city is built in a circle . . . fire and dreadful Mars mounted on a Syrian chariot will bring your towers to ruin . . . temples are tottering in their fall, their walls are dripping with cold sweat, whilst black blood is falling from their pinnacles . . . depart from my sanctuary. Let a wooden wall be your impregnable bulwark. Flee! turn your backs on numberless enemies on foot and on horseback! O divine Salamis! How deadly wilt thou be to those born of woman!"[1] In the account given by Eschylus the battle begins with a cry resembling the pæan, Apollo's hymn: "Soon the day, led on white coursers, spreads throughout the world its resplendent light. Immediately a mighty shout, resembling a sacred chant, rises from the ranks of the Greeks and the echoes of the island respond in a thousand loud-sounding voices." What wonder that, intoxicated with the wine of victory, the Greeks at the battle of Mycale, in the presence of stricken Asia, choose as a rallying cry: "Hebe, Eternal Youth!" Yes, it was the

[1] In the temple language the term *son of woman* indicated the lower degree of initiation, woman here signifying nature. Above these were *the sons of man* or initiates of the Spirit and the Soul, *the sons of the Gods* or initiates of the cosmogonic sciences, and *the sons of God* or initiates in the supreme science. The Pythoness calls the Persians *sons of woman*, giving them this name from the character of their religion. Interpreted literally, her words would be devoid of meaning.

breath of Apollo that moved through these wonderful Median wars. Religious enthusiasm, which works miracles, carried off both living and dead, threw a dazzling light on victory, and gave a golden glory to the tomb. All the temples were plundered and destroyed, that of Delphi alone remained intact. The Persian hosts advanced to spoil the holy town. A quiver of dread came over all. The solar god, however, said through the voice of the pontiff: "I will defend myself!" Orders were given from the temple that the city be deserted, the inhabitants take refuge in the grottoes of Parnassus, and the priests alone keep sacred guard on the threshold of the sanctuary. The Persian army entered the town, all still as death; the statues alone looked down as the hosts marched along. A black cloud gathered at the foot of the gorge, the thunders rolled and the lightning flashed on the invaders. Two enormous rocks rolled down from the summit of Parnassus, crushing to death great numbers of Persians.[1] At the same time noises and shouts

[1] "These may still be seen in the enclosure of Minerva," said Herodotus, VIII. 39. The invasion of the Gauls, which took place two centuries later, was repelled in like manner. Here, too, a storm gathers, thunderbolts fall time after time on the Gauls; the earth quakes beneath their feet, they see supernatural visions; and the temple of Apollo is saved. These facts seem to prove that the priests of Delphi were acquainted with the science of cosmic fire and knew how to handle electricity by occult power as did the Chaldaean magi.—See Amédée Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*, I. 246.

issued from the Temple of Minerva, flames leapt from the ground beneath the very feet of the invaders. Before such wonders the barbarians fell back in terror and the dismayed army took to flight. The god had undertaken his own defence!

Would these wonders have happened, would these victories that humanity looks upon as its own have taken place, had not Pythagoras, thirty years earlier, appeared in the Delphic sanctuary to kindle there the sacred fire? This may, indeed, be questioned.

One word more regarding the master's influence on philosophy. Before his time, there had been natural philosophers on the one hand, and moral philosophers on the other; Pythagoras included in a vast synthesis, morality, science and religion. This synthesis is nothing else than the esoteric doctrine, whose full glory I have endeavoured to reveal in the very basis of Pythagorean initiation. The philosopher of Croton was not the inventor but the light-bearing arranger of these fundamental truths, in the scientific order of things. Consequently I have chosen his system as offering the most favourable framework to a complete account of the doctrine of the Mysteries as well as of true theosophy.

Those who have followed the master up to this point will have seen that at the basis of the doctrine there shines the sun of the one Truth. Scattered rays may be discovered in philosophies and religions, but here is their centre. What must be done to attain thereto? Observation and reasoning are not sufficient. In addition to and above all else is intuition. Pythagoras was an adept and an initiate of the highest order. His was the direct vision of the spirit, his the key to the occult sciences and the spiritual world. It was from the primal fount of Truth that he drew his supplies. And as he joined to these transcendent faculties of an intellectual and spiritualized soul, a careful and minute observation of physical nature and a masterly classification of ideas by the aid of his lofty reason, no one could have been better equipped than himself to build up the edifice of the knowledge of the Kosmos.

In truth this edifice was never destroyed. Plato, who took from Pythagoras the whole of his metaphysics, had a complete idea thereof, though he unfolded it with less clearness and precision. The Alexandrine school occupied the upper storeys of the edifice, whilst modern science has taken the ground-floor and strengthened its foundations.

Numerous philosophical schools and mystical or religious sects have inhabited its many chambers. No philosophy, however, has yet embraced the whole of it. It is this whole I have endeavoured to reveal here in all its harmony and unity.

PLATO

(THE MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS)

Men have called Love Eros, because he has wings ; the Gods have called him Pteros, because he has the virtue of giving wings.

Plato ("The Banquet").

In heaven, to learn is to see ;
On earth, it is to remember.

Happy he who has passed through the Mysteries ;
He knows the origin and the end of life.

Pindar.

PLATO

After attempting to revive in Pythagoras the greatest of the initiates of Greece, and through him the primordial and universal basis of religious and philosophical truth, we might dispense with any mention of Plato, who confined himself to giving this truth a more imaginative and popular form. This, however, is the very reason why we shall stop for a moment to consider the noble Athenian philosopher.

Yes, there is a mother-doctrine, a synthesis of religions and philosophies. It develops and deepens as the ages roll along, but its foundation and centre remain the same. We have gone over the main lines of this doctrine, but is that sufficient? No; we have still to show the providential reasons for its different forms, according to race and time. We must re-establish the chain of the great initiates, who were the real initiators of humanity. Then, the might of each of them will be multiplied by that of all the rest, and the unity of truth will appear in the very diversity of its expression.

Like everything in nature, Greece has had her dawn, the full blaze of her sun, and her decline. Such is the law of days, of men, and nations, of earths and heavens. Orpheus is the initiate of the dawn, Pythagoras the initiate of the full daylight, and Plato that of the setting sun of Greece, a setting of glowing purple which becomes the rose of a new dawn, the dawn of humanity. Plato follows Pythagoras, just as the torch-bearer followed the great hierophant in the mysteries of Eleusis. With him we shall now travel once more, along a fresh path, through the avenues of the sanctuary, right to the heart of the temple, there to behold the great arcanum.

Before proceeding to Eleusis, however, let us listen for a moment to our guide, the divine Plato. Let him show us his own natal horizon, relate to us the story of his soul, and lead us to the feet of his beloved master.

CHAPTER I

THE YOUTH OF PLATO AND THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

Plato was born in Athens, that city of beauty and humanity. His youthful vision encountered no obstacle or limit. Attica, exposed to every wind, projects into the Ægean Sea, like the prow of a vessel, and queens it over the cycle of isles, lying there like white sirens on the dark blue waves. He grew up at the feet of the Acropolis, beneath the guardianship of Pallas Athena, in that wide plain enclosed within violet mountains and enveloped in a luminous azure, a plain situated between marble-flanked Pentelichus, pine-crested Hymettus, the sweet-smelling home of bees, and the peaceful bay of Eleusis.

Dark and troubled, in contrast, was the political horizon during Plato's childhood and youth. This was the period of that implacable Peloponnesian war, the fratricidal struggle between Athens and Sparta which led to the overthrow of Greece. The mighty days of the Medic wars had vanished; the suns of Marathon and Salamis had set. The year

of Plato's birth (429 B.C.) marked that of the death of Pericles, the greatest statesman of Greece, as upright as Aristides and as able as Themistocles, the most perfect representative of Hellenic civilisation, capable of swaying and guiding that turbulent democracy—an ardent patriot, though calm as a demi-god—in the midst of a popular upheaval. Plato's mother must have related to her son a scene at which she had certainly been present, two years before the birth of the future philosopher. The Spartans had invaded Attica ; Athens, whose national existence was already threatened, had struggled a whole winter, Pericles being the soul of its defence. In the course of that gloomy year, an imposing ceremony took place at the Ceramicus. The coffins of the warriors who had died for their country were placed on funeral chariots, and the people summoned to the monumental tomb destined to receive them. This mausoleum seemed to be the magnificent though sinister symbol of the tomb Greece was digging for herself, in her criminal struggle. It was then that Pericles pronounced the finest speech antiquity has preserved for us. Thucydides transcribed it on his tablets, as enduring as brass, and the following sentence shines forth like a shield on the pediment of a temple : " The whole universe is the tomb of heroes, not columns

covered with pompous inscriptions." In such a sentiment, do we not see breathing the very consciousness of Greece and of her immortality ?

But when Pericles died, what remained alive of ancient Greece in her men of action ? Inside Athens, the discord of a demagogy at bay ; outside, the Lacedæmonian invasion ever at the gates, war by land and sea, and all the time the gold of the King of Persia circulating like a corrupting poison in the hands of the tribunes and magistrates. Alcibiades had replaced Pericles in popular favour. This type of the gilded youth of Athens had become the man of the hour. Rash politician and seductive intriguer as he was, he led his country to ruin, with a smile on his lips. Plato had observed him carefully, for later on he gave a masterly psychological description of his character. He compared the mad desire for power which filled the soul of Alcibiades to a large-winged hornet-drone, " round which the passions, crowned with flowers, perfumed with essences and intoxicated with wine and all those unbridled pleasures which follow in their train, come buzzing, nourishing and rearing it, and finally arming it with the spur of ambition. Then this tyrant of the soul, with madness as his escort, stirs about furiously ; if he finds about him honest thoughts and sentiments still capable of

feeling shame, he drives them away and kills them, until he has cleansed the soul of all temperance and filled it with the madness he has brought."

So we see that the sky of Athens was considerably clouded during the youth of Plato. At the age of twenty-five, he was present at the capture of Athens by the Spartans, after the disastrous naval battle of Ægospotami. Then he witnessed the entrance of Lysander into his native town, indicating the end of Athenian independence. He saw the long walls built by Themistocles thrown down to the sound of festival music, and the enemy literally dancing in triumph over the ruins of his country. Then came the Thirty Tyrants and their proscriptions.

These sights saddened the youthful soul of Plato, though they could not unsettle it, for it was as clear and open as the vault of heaven above the Acropolis. Plato was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, grave and reserved, scarcely ever speaking, though when he did open his mouth, an exquisite, charming gentleness seemed to characterise his words. There was nothing striking or extravagant in him. His various aptitudes were concealed, as though they had dissolved into the higher harmony of his being. The serious bent of his mind was hidden by a winged grace and natural modesty, whilst an almost feminine tenderness

served to veil the firmness of his character. In him, virtue clothed itself with a smile and pleasure with an ingenuous chastity. But what formed the dominant, the extraordinary, and unique characteristic of this soul was the fact that, at birth, it seemed to have concluded a mysterious pact with Eternity. Only things that were eternal seemed living in the depths of his great eyes, other things passed by like unsubstantial forms in a profound mirror. Behind the visible, changing, imperfect forms of the world and of the beings in it, there appeared to him the invisible, perfect forms eternally shining forth, of these same beings, which the spirit sees and which are the eternal models of the others. And so we see that the youthful Plato, without formulating his doctrine or even knowing that some day he would be a philosopher, was already conscious of the divine reality of the Ideal and of its omnipresence. As he saw the women, the funeral chariots, the armies and *fêtes* and the mourning, his looks seemed to behold something else and to ask : " Why do they weep, why do they raise shouts of joy ? They believe they are and yet they are not. Why cannot I attach myself to that which is born, to that which dies ? Wherefore can I love nothing but the Invisible, which is never born and which never dies, but which always is ? "

Love and Harmony are the foundation of Plato's soul, but his Love and Beauty are eternal, his Harmony, that which enfolds the universe. The more mighty and profound a soul, the longer it takes to know itself. His first outbursts of enthusiasm spent themselves in art. He was of noble lineage, for his father alleged that he was descended from King Codrus, and his mother from Solon. Consequently his youthful days were those of a rich Athenian, surrounded by every luxury and all the seductions of a period of decadence. He gave himself up to them without either excess or prudishness, living the same life as his companions, in the noble enjoyment of a fine inheritance, and surrounded and fêted by numerous friends. In his *Phædrus*, he has too well described the passion of love in all its phases, not to have personally experienced its keen transports and cruel disillusions. We have a single line of poetry from him, as passionate as a line by Sappho, and radiant as a starry night on the sea of the Cyclades: "Would I were Heaven itself; all eyes, to behold thee!" Searching for the supremely beautiful through every mode and form of beauty, he studied painting, music, and poetry in turn. The last of these seemed as though it would respond to all his needs and finally determine his desires. Plato had a wonderful facility

for every kind of poetry ; he felt with equal intensity amorous and dithyrambic poetry, the epopee, tragedy, and comedy even in its subtlest form. Why should he not become a second Sophocles and rescue the theatre of Athens from imminent downfall ? This ambition tempted him, and his friends encouraged him in the idea. At the age of twenty-seven he had written several tragedies and was about to offer one for competition.

It was about this time that Plato met Socrates, who was discussing with some youths in the gardens of the Academy. He was speaking about the Just and the Unjust, the Beautiful, the Good, and the True. The poet drew near to the philosopher, listened to him, and returned on the morrow and for several days afterwards. At the end of a few weeks, his mind had undergone a complete revolution ; the happy youth, the poet full of illusions, no longer recognised himself. Not only the trend of his ideas, but the very object of his life had changed. Another Plato had been born in him, as he listened to the words of the one who called himself "the one who brings souls to birth." What had happened ? By what spell had this satyr-faced reasoner torn the handsome, talented Plato away from his voluptuous luxury and poetry, and converted him to wisdom's great renunciation ?

This good-natured Socrates was a simple fellow, though very eccentric. Son of a statuary, he sculptured the three Graces in his youth ; then he flung away his chisel, saying that he preferred to carve his soul rather than marble. From that moment, he gave up his whole life to the search of wisdom. He might be met with in the gymnasia, on the public square, at the theatre, talking to young men, artists, philosophers, asking each of them the reason for whatever he affirmed. For several years past, the sophists had beaten down on Athens like a cloud of locusts. The sophist is the counterfeit and living negation of the philosopher, just as the demagogue is the counterfeit of the statesman, the hypocrite of the priest, and the black magician the infernal counterfeit of the real initiate. The Greek type of the sophist is more subtle, more reasoning and corrosive than the rest, but as a class they belong to all decadent civilisations. Here sophists swarm, as fatally as do worms in a body in a state of decomposition. Whether they call themselves atheists, nihilists, or pessimists, sophists of all times resemble one another. They always deny God and the Soul, that is to say, supreme Truth and Life. Those contemporary with Socrates, like Gorgias, Prodicus, and Protagoras, said that there was no difference between

truth and error. They prided themselves on proving any idea whatsoever and its contrary, affirming that there is no other justice than might, no other truth than the opinion of the subject. With all this they were self-satisfied, lovers of good cheer, and charged very high prices for their lessons. They also incited the youth of Athens to debauchery, intrigue, and tyranny.

Socrates approached sophists with insinuating gentleness and innocence, as though he were an ignorant man, desirous of learning. His eyes shone with benevolent intelligence. Then, from question to question he forced them to say the contrary of what they had first affirmed, and actually to confess that they did not even know that of which they spoke. Then he demonstrated that the sophists knew the cause and origin of nothing, though they pretended to be in possession of universal knowledge. After silencing them in this way, he did not triumph in his victory, but smilingly thanked his opponents for the information he had obtained from their replies, adding that the beginning of true wisdom consists in knowing that one knows nothing. What did Socrates himself believe and affirm? He did not deny the gods; he even worshipped them like the rest of his fellow-citizens, though he said that their nature was impenetrable. He con-

fessed also that he understood nothing of the physics and metaphysics taught in the schools. The important thing, he said, was to believe in the Just and the True, and to apply them to life. His arguments were very powerful, for he was a living example of them : an irreproachable citizen, a bold soldier, an upright judge, a faithful, disinterested friend, and absolutely master of every passion.

Thus do the tactics of moral education change according to time and environment. Pythagoras, in the presence of initiate disciples, brought ethics home to them in his teaching of cosmogony, whilst in the public square at Athens, before men like Cleon and Gorgias, Socrates spoke of the innate sentiment of the Just and the True, in order to reconstruct the world and the shattered social order. Both of them, the one in the descending, the other in the ascending order of principles, affirmed the same truth. Pythagoras represents the principles and method of the loftiest initiation ; Socrates proclaims the era of open science. That he might still preserve his *rôle* as popular exponent, he refused to become initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis. None the less, however, was he possessed of the signification and faith of the total, supreme truth taught by the great Mysteries. When

speaking of them, his face changed in expression like that of an inspired, god-possessed Faun. His eyes flashed, his countenance became transfigured, and from his lips there fell one of those simple luminous sentences which reveal the bases of things.

Why was Plato irresistibly charmed and subjugated by this man? When he saw him, he understood the superiority of the Good over the Beautiful. For the Beautiful realises the True only in the mirage of Art, whilst the Good is accomplished in the depths of the soul. Rare and powerful is the fascination, for the senses have no part in it. The sight of a really just man caused the dazzling splendours of visible art to pale away in Plato's soul, there to give place to a diviner dream.

This man showed him the inferiority of beauty and glory as he had conceived them hitherto, in comparison with the beauty and glory of the soul in action, which attracts, for ever, other souls to its truth; whilst the pomp of Art succeeds only in causing a deceptive truth to be reflected beneath an illusive veil. This radiant, eternal Beauty, "the Shining of the True," killed the changing, deceptive beauty which was in Plato's soul. This is the reason Plato, forgetting and leaving all he

had hitherto loved, gave himself with all the poetry of his soul to Socrates in the flower of his youth. A great victory of Truth over Beauty, big with incalculable consequences in the history of the human mind.

Plato's friends, all the same, expected to see him make his *début* in poetry on the tragic stage. He invited them to a great feast at his house, and all were amazed at his desire to give this *fête* at such a time, for it was the custom to give one only after having obtained the prize and when the winning tragedy had been played. No one, however, refused an invitation sent out by this rich youth, in whose home the Muses and the Graces met together in the company of Eros. His house had long served as a meeting-place for the elegant youth of Athens. Plato spent a fortune on this feast. The table was laid out in the garden, whilst youths, torch in hand, afforded light for the guests. The most beautiful courtezans of Athens were present, and feasting was carried on throughout the night. Hymns were chanted to Love and Bacchus. Female flute-players danced their most voluptuous dances. Finally, they requested Plato to recite one of his own dithyrambs. Rising to his feet with a smile, he said : " This feast is the last I shall ever give you. From this day onward, I renounce the

pleasures of life to consecrate myself to wisdom and to follow the teachings of Socrates. Be it known to all of you that I even renounce poetry, for I have recognised how powerless it is to express the truth I am following after. I will not write another line, but will now burn in your presence all I have composed." A cry of mingled astonishment and protest rose from every one round the table, where the guests, crowned with roses, were reclining on sumptuous couches. Some expressed surprise, others indignation, written clearly on countenances flushed with wine and gay conversation. The sophists present and the men about town indulged in laughs of incredulity and scorn. Plato's idea was regarded as both mad and sacrilegious, and he was requested to withdraw what he had said. He repeated his determination, however, in tones of calm assurance which permitted of no reply, and concluded with the words: "I thank all of you who have been good enough to join in this farewell *fête*, but I shall now keep by my side only such as are willing to share my new life. The friends of Socrates shall henceforth be my friends and those only." These words passed like a blighting frost over a meadow of flowers. They suddenly gave these ruddy expansive countenances the sad, embarrassed looks of men present at a funeral ceremony. The

courtezans rose to their feet, and, with looks of vexation at the master of the house, were carried off in their litters. The sophists and elegant fops slunk away, saying in tones of mingled irony and sprightliness: "Farewell, Plato! Be happy! Thou wilt come back to us! Farewell! Farewell!" Two serious-minded youths alone remained behind. Those faithful friends he took by the hand, and, leaving the half-emptied amphoras of wine, the roses with their leaves scattered about, and the lyres and flutes lying in disorder among goblets filled with wine, Plato led the way to the inner court of the house. There, piled on a small altar, they saw a pyramid of papyrus rolls. These consisted of the whole of the poetical works of Plato. Taking up a torch, the poet set fire to them, smiling as he uttered the words: "Vulcan, come hither! Plato hath need of thee." [1]

When the flames had died away, and the last flicker was over, the friends, with tears in their eyes, silently bade farewell to their future master. Plato, however, who was left alone, did not weep, for wonderful peace and serenity filled his entire being. He was thinking of Socrates whom he was

[1] Fragment of the complete works of Plato, preserved under the title: "Plato burning his poems."

going to see. The rising dawn cast its radiance over the terraces of the houses, the colonnades and pediments of the temples ; and soon the helmet of Minerva shone with the sun's first beam on the top of the Acropolis.

CHAPTER II

THE INITIATION OF PLATO AND THE PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

THREE years after Plato had become the disciple of Socrates, the latter was condemned to death by the Areopagus, and died by drinking the hemlock, surrounded by his disciples.

Few historical events are so well known as this, and there are few whose causes and effects have been so badly understood. At the present day it is held that the Areopagus was in the right to condemn Socrates as an enemy of the State religion, because, in denying the gods, he was undermining the foundations of the Athenian Republic. We shall shortly show that this assertion contains two profound errors. Let us first call to mind what Victor Cousin has had the courage to write at the head of the *Apology of Socrates*, in his fine translation of Plato's works: "Anytus, it must be stated, was a citizen worthy of commendation; the Areopagus, a just and dispassionate tribunal; and

the only thing one may wonder at, is that Socrates was accused so late in the day, and that he was not condemned by a larger majority." The philosopher, a Minister of Education, did not see that, if he was right, they should also have condemned philosophy and religion, solely for the sake of the glorification of a policy of lying, violence, and absolutism. For if philosophy necessarily overthrows the foundations of the social condition, it is nothing but pompous madness, and if religion cannot exist except by suppressing the search after truth, it is nothing less than a fatal tyranny. Let us try to be more just towards both Greek religion and Greek philosophy.

There is one important and striking fact which has escaped the notice of most modern historians and philosophers. Persecution in Greece, very rare against philosophers, was never begun in the temples, but was always the work of politicians. Hellenic civilisation has known nothing of that war between priests and philosophers, which has played so great a part in our civilisation, ever since the destruction of Christian esotericism in the second century of our era. Thales might quietly state that the world comes from water ; Heraclitus that it springs from fire ; Anaxagoras might say that the sun is a mass of incandescent fire, and Democritus

claim that everything springs from atoms: no temple suffered uneasiness. In the temples they knew all that and much more beside. They also knew that the would-be philosophers who denied the gods could not destroy them in the national consciousness, and that real philosophers believed in them after the fashion of the initiates, and saw in them the symbols of the mighty categories of the spiritual hierarchy, of the Divine which penetrates all Nature, and of the Invisible which governs the Visible. The esoteric doctrine accordingly served as a bond between true philosophy and true religion. This is the profound, the primordial and final fact which explains their secret meaning in Hellenic civilisation.

Who then accused Socrates? The priests of Eleusis, who had uttered maledictions on those who had stirred up the Peloponnesian War, shaking the dust of their robes towards the west, did not utter a single word against him. The temple of Delphi gave him the finest testimony that could be paid to any man. The Pythoness, on being consulted as to what Apollo thought of Socrates, replied: "There is no man living who is more reasonable, free, or just."[1] The two main accusations therefore brought against Socrates: that he corrupted

[1] Xenophon: *Apology of Socrates.*

the youth, and did not believe in the gods, were only a pretext. On the second charge, the accused victoriously answered his judges: "I believe in my familiar spirit; how much more then must I believe in the gods, who are the great spirits of the universe?" Then why was there such implacable hatred against the sage? He had combated injustice, unmasked hypocrisy, exposed the falsehood of so many vain claims. Men excuse all vices and atheisms except those which unmask themselves. This was why the real atheists, sitting at the Areopagus, brought about the death of the just and innocent man, by accusing him of the crime they were committing. In his admirable defence, reproduced by Plato, Socrates explains this himself with perfect simplicity: "It is my fruitless search for wise men amongst the Athenians, that has roused against me so much dangerous hostility; hence all the slanders spread abroad regarding me, for those who hear me believe that I know all those things regarding which I unmask the ignorance of others. . . . An active and numerous body of intriguers, speaking about me according to an arranged plan and with the most seductive eloquence, have long filled your ears with the most perfidious reports and unceasingly followed up their system of calumny. To-day, they have

weaned from me Melitus, Anytus, and Lycon. Melitus represents the poets, Anytus the politicians and artists, and Lycon the orators." A tragic poet, devoid of talent, a wicked fanatical man of wealth, and a shameless demagogue, succeeded in obtaining sentence of death against the best man living. This death has immortalised him. He could proudly say to his judges : " I believe more in the gods than do any of my accusers. It is time to depart, I to die, and you to live. Which is the better, God alone knows." [1]

Far from shattering true religion and its national symbols, Socrates had done everything possible to strengthen them. Could his country have understood him, he would have been its greatest strength and stay. Like Jesus, he died uttering words of pardon on his murderers, and became the model of martyr sages for the whole of humanity ; for he represents the definite advent of individual initiation and open science.

The serene spectacle of Socrates dying for the sake of truth, and spending his last hour in conversing with his disciples on the immortality of the soul, sank deep into Plato's heart. To him it was the most beautiful and holy of mysteries, his first great initiation. Later in life, he was to study

[1] Plato: *Apology of Socrates.*

physics, metaphysics, and many other sciences, but he ever remained the disciple of Socrates. He has bequeathed us the living image of the latter by putting the treasures of his own thought into the mouth of his master. This flower of modesty makes of him the disciple's ideal, just as the fire of enthusiasm shows him to us as the poet of philosophers. It avails us nothing to know that he founded his school only when fifty years old, and died at the age of eighty: we cannot imagine him as anything else than young, for eternal youth is the portion of those souls which unite divine candour with profundity of thought.

Plato had received from Socrates the great impulse, the active male principle of his life, his faith in justice and truth. He was indebted for the science and substance of his ideas to his initiation into the Mysteries, and his genius consists in the new form, at once poetic and dialectic, he was enabled to give to them. He did not receive this initiation from Eleusis alone, but sought for it from every accessible source. After the death of Socrates, he travelled about. He attended the lessons of several philosophers in Asia Minor. Then he went to Egypt, to come into touch with its priests and go through the initiation of Isis. He did not reach, as did Pythagoras, the highest stage,

at which one becomes an adept and acquires an effective and direct vision of divine truth, with supernatural powers, from an earthly standpoint. He stopped at the third stage, which confers perfect intellectual clearness, along with the dominion of the intellect over soul and body. Then he went to southern Italy to enter into communication with the followers of Pythagoras, well knowing that Pythagoras had been the greatest sage of Greece. He paid an enormous price for one of the master's manuscripts. After thus obtaining from its very source the esoteric tradition of Socrates, he borrowed from this philosopher his main ideas, and the framework of his system.[1]

On returning to Athens, Plato founded his school, which remained so famous under the name of the Academy. Truth must be spread abroad if he wished to continue the work of Socrates. Plato, however, could not publicly teach what the Pythagoreans covered with a triple veil. Prudence,

[1] "What Orpheus promulgated in obscure allegories," says Proclus, "Pythagoras taught, after being initiated into the Orphic mysteries, and Plato had full knowledge of it from Orphic and Pythagorean writings." This opinion of the Alexandrian School regarding the filiation of the Platonic ideas, is fully confirmed by the comparative study of the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions, and the writings of Plato. This filiation, kept secret for centuries, was revealed only by the Alexandrian philosophers, for they were the first to make known the esoteric meaning of the Mysteries.

his oaths, and the very end he had in view all forbade this. It is indeed the esoteric doctrine we find in his *Dialogues*, though dissembled and mitigated, travestied in legends, myths or parables. Here it no longer appears with that imposing *ensemble* Pythagoras gave to it, and which we have attempted to reconstitute, an edifice founded on an immutable basis, and all of whose parts are firmly cemented together, though in analytical fragments. Plato, like Socrates, places himself on the same territory as the gay youths of Athens, the rhetoricians and sophists. He fights them with their own weapons. His genius is never absent, however, for every moment he breaks the network of dialectics, like an eagle, to mount, in bold flight, to those sublime truths which form his native atmosphere and his real fatherland. These dialogues have a piquant charm, all their own ; in them are found not only the enthusiasm of Delphi and Eleusis, but also wonderful clearness and Attic wit, the archness of the simple-minded Socrates, and the delicate, winged irony of the sage.

Nothing is easier than to recognise the different parts of the esoteric doctrine in Plato and at the same time to discover the sources from which he has obtained them. The doctrine of the idea-types of things, as set forth in *Phædrus*, is a corollary

to the doctrine of the *Sacred Numbers* of Pythagoras.[1] The *Timæus* gives a very confused and obscure account of esoteric cosmogony. The doctrine of the soul, its migrations and evolution, traverses the whole work of Plato, though nowhere does it appear so clearly as in *The Banquet*, in *Phædo*, and in *The Legend of Er* in the last book of *The Republic*. We perceive Psyche under a veil, but how touching is her beauty, with its exquisite form and divine grace, as she shines through it!

In Pythagoras, it is seen that the key of the Kosmos, the secret of its constitution throughout, is found in the principle of *the three worlds*, reflected by the microcosm and the macrocosm in the human and divine ternary. Pythagoras had formulated and summed up this doctrine in masterly fashion under the symbol of the *Sacred Tetrad*. This doctrine of the living eternal Word, constituted the great arcanum, the source of magic, the diamond temple of the initiate, his impregnable citadel above the ocean of things. In his public teaching, Plato neither could nor would reveal this arcanum. First, the oath of the mysteries closed his mouth, and secondly, all would not have understood; the common people would unworthily have profaned this theogonic mystery, which contains the generation of the

[1] See a fuller exposition of this doctrine in *Pythagoras*.

worlds. Something else was needed to combat the corruption of morals and the mad unbridling of political passions. The gate of the beyond was soon about to close, with the great initiation, that gate which brings light only to mighty prophets, to real initiates.

Plato replaced the doctrine of the three worlds by three concepts which, in the absence of organised initiation, remained for two thousand years, three paths leading to the same final goal. These three concepts refer alike to the human and the divine world; they possess the advantage of uniting them, though in abstract fashion. Here is manifested the popularising and creative genius of Plato. He shed torrents of light over the world, setting the ideas of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good on the same line. Throwing light on one by means of the other, he showed that they are three rays starting from the same centre, and that the same rays, when they meet one another, reconstitute this very centre, that is to say, God.

In following after the Good, that is to say, the Just, the soul is purified, it prepares itself to know Truth. This is the first, the indispensable condition of its progress. In following after and enlarging the idea of the Beautiful, it attains to the intellectually Beautiful, that intelligible light, the

mother of things, animating all forms, the substance and organ of God. As it plunges into the soul of the world, the human soul acquires for itself wings. In following after the idea of the True, it attains to pure Essence, the principles contained in pure Spirit. It recognises its immortality through the identity of its principle with the divine principle, Perfection ; the epiphany of the soul.

When he opened up these great paths to the human mind, Plato defined and created, outside of narrow systems and particular religions, *the category of the Ideal*, which was to replace for centuries, and still does, a complete *organic initiation*. He prepared the three sacred paths which lead to God, just as the sacred way of Athens led to Eleusis through the gate of Ceramicus. Having penetrated into the interior of the temple with Hermes, Orpheus, and Pythagoras, we are better enabled to judge as to the solidity and the soundness of these wide roads laid down by the divine engineer, Plato. The knowledge of Initiation gives us the justification and the *raison d'être* of Idealism.

Idealism is the bold affirmation of divine truths by the soul, which questions itself in its solitude and judges of celestial realities by its inmost faculties and inner voices. *Initiation* is the penetration of

these truths by the experience of the soul, the direct vision of the spirit, the inner resurrection. In the highest degree, it is the bringing of the soul into communication with the divine world.

The Ideal is a morality, a poetry, and a philosophy; *Initiation* is an action, a vision, the sublime presence of Truth. The Ideal is the dream and the regret of the divine father-land; Initiation, that temple of the elect, is its distinct remembrance; its very possession.

Plato, accordingly, when building up the category of the Ideal, created a refuge, opened up a way of salvation to millions of souls who cannot, in this lifetime, attain to direct initiation, but painfully aspire after truth. He thus made philosophy the vestibule of a future sanctuary, inviting thereto all such as were seriously minded. The idealism of his numerous pagan or Christian sons appears to us the waiting-room, so to speak, of the great initiation.

This explains the immense popularity and the far-reaching influence of Plato's ideas. Their power lies in their esoteric basis. This is the reason the Academy of Athens, founded by Plato, lasted for centuries and extended into the mighty school of Alexandria; this is why the first Fathers of the Church paid homage to Plato and why Saint Augustine took from him two-thirds of his theology.

Two thousand years had passed since the disciple of Socrates had breathed his last sigh beneath the shadow of the Acropolis. Christianity, barbarian invasions, the Middle Ages had passed over the world. Antiquity, however, was rising again from her ashes. In Florence the Medicis wished to found an Academy, and summoned a Greek servant, an exile from Constantinople, to organise it. And what name did Marsile Ficin give it ? He called it the Platonic Academy. Even in these days, after so many philosophic systems, built upon one another, have crumbled to dust, when science has reduced matter to its final transformations and finds itself face to face with the inexplicable and the invisible, Plato has again returned to us. Ever simple and modest, though radiant with eternal youth, he holds out to us the sacred branch of the Mysteries, the branch of myrtle and of cypress along with the narcissus : the *soul-flower* which promises divine rebirth in a new Eleusis.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS

In Greek and Latin antiquity, the Eleusinian mysteries formed the object of special veneration. Those very authors who turned into ridicule the mythological fables dared not attack the cult of the "great goddesses." Their reign, whilst less boisterous than that of the Olympians, showed itself to be more certain and efficacious. In times immemorial, a Greek colony from Egypt had brought the cult of the great Isis into the peaceful bay of Eleusis, under the name of Demeter, or the universal mother. From that time, Eleusis had remained a centre of initiation.

Demeter and her daughter Persephone presided over the lesser and the greater mysteries; hence the prestige they acquired.

Whilst the people revered in Ceres the mother earth and the goddess of agriculture, the initiates saw in her, celestial light, the mother of souls; and divine Intelligence, the mother of the cosmogonic gods. Her cult was served by priests belonging to

the most ancient sacerdotal family in Attica. They called themselves sons of the Moon, that is to say, born to be mediators between Earth and Heaven, and sprung from the sphere where the bridge is projected between the two regions, the bridge along which souls ascend and descend. From the first, it had been their function "to sing, or chant, in that abyss of misery, the delights of the heavenly abode, and to teach the methods enabling one to regain the path." Hence their name, Eumolpidæ, "chanters of beneficent melodies," gentle regenerators of men. The priests of Eleusis always taught the great esoteric doctrine which came to them from Egypt. As time passed, they invested it with all the charm of a ravishing, plastic mythology. With subtle, profound art, those enchanters were able to make use of earthly passions, in order to express celestial ideas. They put to profit, sense attraction, ceremonial pomp, and the seductiveness of art, to bring the soul to a better life and the mind to a knowledge of divine truth. Nowhere did the mysteries appear beneath a form so human, so living and coloured.

The myth of Ceres and of her daughter Proserpine formed the heart of the cult of Eleusis.[1] The whole of the Eleusinian initiation turns and develops, like

[1] See the Homeric hymn to Demeter.

a shining procession, around this luminous circle. Now, in its inmost signification, this myth is the symbolical representation of the history of the soul, its descent into matter, its sufferings in the darkness of forgetfulness, and then its ascent and return to divine life. In other words, it is the drama of the Fall and the Redemption, in its Hellenic form.

It may accordingly be affirmed, on the other hand, that, to the cultured Athenian initiate of the time of Plato, the mysteries of Eleusis offered the explanatory complement, the luminous counterpart of the tragic performances in Athens. There, in the theatre of Bacchus, before the roaring masses of people, the terrible incantations of Melpomene summoned forth the inhabitant of earth, blinded by his passions, pursued by the Nemesis of his crimes, and overwhelmed by an implacable and often incomprehensible Destiny. And there, too, could be seen and heard the Promethean struggles, the imprecations of the Furies, the despair of Œdipus, and the madness of Orestes. This also was the abode of gloomy terror and rueful pity. At Eleusis, in the hall of Ceres, everything was filled with light; the circle of things extended for the initiates who had become seers. For each soul, the history of Psyche-Persephone was a surprising

revelation. Life was explained either as an expiation or as a test. Both beyond and on this side of his earthly present, man discovered the starry zones of a divine future and past. After the terrors of death came hope and liberation, Elysian joys; through the porticoes of the wide-open temple passed the chants of the blessed, the submerging light of a marvellous beyond.

Such were the Mysteries in the presence of Tragedy: the divine drama of the soul completing and explaining the terrestrial drama of man.

The Lesser Mysteries were celebrated in the month of February, at Agrae, near Athens. Candidates who had passed a preliminary examination, and given proofs of their birth, education, and honour, were received at the entrance to the sacred enclosure by the priest of Eleusis named the *hieroceryx*, or sacred herald, resembling Hermes, with the petasus on his head and the caduceus in his hand. He was the guide, the mediator, and interpreter of the Mysteries, and conducted the new-comers to a small temple, with Ionic columns, dedicated to *Korē*, the great Virgin, Persephone. The graceful sanctuary of the goddess lay hidden in the depths of a peaceful vale, surrounded by a sacred wood between groups of yew-trees and white poplars. Then the priestesses of Proserpine, the hiero-

phantids, left the temple, each wearing an immaculate peplus, with bare arms and heads wreathed in narcissus blooms. They stood in a line at the top of the stairs, and struck up a solemn chant in Doric fashion:

"Oh! candidates of the Mysteries, you have now reached the threshold of Proserpine. All you are now about to see will surprise you. You will learn that your present life is nothing but a tissue of lying and confused dreams. The sleep, which surrounds you with a zone of darkness, carries off your dreams and days in its flow like floating *débris* which vanish before human sight. Beyond, a zone of eternal light extends. May Proserpine be propitious to you and teach you, herself, to cross the river of darkness and advance right to the celestial Demeter."

Then the prophantid, or prophetess who led the choir, descended three steps of the staircase and uttered the following malediction in solemn tones and with terrifying look: "Woe be to such as have come to profane the Mysteries! The goddess will pursue such perverse hearts during the whole of their lifetime, and in the kingdom of the shades she will not let go her prey!"

Afterwards, several days were spent in fasting, ablutions, and prayers.

On the evening of the final day, the neophytes assembled in the most secret part of the sacred wood, there to assist at *the rape of Persephone*. The scene was played in the open air, by the priestesses of the temple. This custom dated from far back, and the basis of this performance, as well as its main idea, remained always the same, though its form varied greatly throughout the course of the ages. In Plato's time, owing to the recent development of tragedy, the former hieratic severity had given place to a more humane and refined taste and to a tendency in which passion played a large part. Guided by the hierophant, the anonymous poets of Eleusis had made of this scene a short drama which ran somewhat as follows :

(*The neophytes, in couples, reach a glade. In the background may be seen rocks and a grotto, surrounded by a wood of myrtles and poplars. In front, a meadow, with nymphs reclining about a fountain. At the far end of the grotto is seated* Persephone, *naked to the girdle, like a Psyche, her graceful bust chastely emerging from flowing drapery, wrapped round her like an azure vapour. She seems to be happy, quite unconscious of her beauty, and is embroidering a long veil of many-coloured threads.* Demeter *her mother stands by her side, sceptre in hand and kalathos on her head.*)

Hermes (*the herald of the Mysteries to the spectators*). Demeter offers us two excellent gifts: the fruits of the earth, that we may not live like the beasts of the fields, and initiation, which gives a sweeter hope to those who participate in it both for the end of this life and for all eternity. Give heed to the words you are about to hear and the things you are now to see.

Demeter (*in solemn accents*). Beloved daughter of the gods, remain in this grotto and embroider my veil until I return. Heaven is thy father-land and the universe is thine. Thou seest the gods; they come to thy call. Listen not to the voice of Eros, the cunning one, with his mild eyes and treacherous counsel. Beware of leaving the grotto or gathering the seductive flowers of earth; their fatal distracting perfume would make thee lose the light of heaven and even the memory of it. Weave my veil and live happily with thy companions, the nymphs, until my return. Then I will take thee in my chariot of fire, drawn by serpents, right into the splendour of the Ether, above the Milky Way.

Persephone. August and redoubtable mother, by this surrounding light so dear to me, I promise it. May the gods punish me, if I keep not my oath. (*Exit* Demeter.)

Chorus of Nymphs. O Persephone! Virgin!

Chaste bride of Heaven, thou who embroiderest the faces of the gods on thy veil, mayst thou never know the empty illusions and countless evils of earth. Eternal Truth smiles on thee and Dionysus, thy celestial spouse, awaits thee in the Empyrean. At times he appears to thee in the form of a distant sun; his rays play about thee; he breathes thy breath and thou drinkest in his light. . . . Already do ye possess one another . . . O Virgin! Who is happier than thou?

Persephone. On this azure veil, with its interminable folds, I work the innumerable forms of beings and of all things with my ivory needle. I have finished the history of the gods and embroidered horrible Chaos, with his hundred heads and thousand arms, whence mortal beings must issue. Then who has given them birth? The Father of the Gods told me that it was Eros, though I have never seen him; I know not his appearance. Who will depict me his face?

The Nymphs. Think not of that. Wherefore this vain question?

Persephone (*rising and flinging aside the veil*). Eros! The most ancient and yet the youngest of the gods, inexhaustible spring of joys and tears—for this have I been told of thee—thou terrible god, alone unknown and invisible of Immortals, and

alone desirable, mysterious Eros! With what a giddy terror thy name fills me!

The Chorus. Seek not to learn more. Dangerous questions have proved the downfall of men and even of gods.

Persephone (*her terror-stricken eyes gazing into the void*). Is it a past memory, or a frightful presentiment? Chaos . . . men . . . the birth-cries . . . the mad clamour of hatred and war . . . the abyss of death! I see and hear it all, and the deep calls to me. I must descend. Eros, with his flaming torch, plunges me therein. Ah! I am dying! Away from me, this horrible dream! (*Covering her face with her hands, she bursts into sobs.*)

The Chorus. Oh! Divine virgin, this is yet but a dream, though it would take on a body and become inevitable reality, and thy heaven would disappear like an empty dream, wert thou to yield to thy guilty desire. Obey this salutary warning, take up thy needle once more and weave thy veil. Forget cunning Eros, impudent, criminal Eros!

Persephone (*removes her hands from her face, which has changed expression; she smiles through her tears*). How mad you are, and how insensate I was! Now, I remember, I heard in the Olympian Mysteries that Eros is the most beautiful of the

gods ; seated on a winged chariot he presides over the evolutions of the Immortals, over the blending of the initial essences. It is he who conducts the bold and heroic from the depths of Chaos to the heights of the Ether. He knows all ; like the Fire-Principle, he passes through all worlds and he keeps the keys of earth and heaven ! I will see him !

The Chorus. Unhappy maiden ! Stop !

Eros (*issues from the wood in the form of a winged youth*). Dost thou call me, Persephone ? Here I am.

Persephone (*sitting down again*). They say thou art cunning, though thy face is innocence itself ; all-powerful, though thou resemblest a feeble child ; treacherous, and yet the more I look into thine eyes, the more my heart overflows with confidence in thee, thou pretty, playful child. They say thou art knowing and skilful ; canst thou help me to embroider this veil ?

Eros. Willingly ; I will sit at thy feet. What a wonderful veil ! It appears as though it had been plunged into the azure of thine eyes. What wonderful shapes thine hand has embroidered thereon ! though less beautiful than the divine embroiderer who has never seen herself in a mirror. (*He smiles roguishly.*)

Persephone. See myself ! Would that be pos-

sible? (*She blushes.*) Dost thou recognise these forms?

Eros. Recognise them! It is the history of the gods. But wherefore stop at Chaos? That is where the struggle begins. Wilt thou not weave the war with the Titans, the birth of men and their loves?

Persephone. My knowledge stops here, my memory fails. Wilt thou help me to embroider the rest?

Eros (*gives her a burning glance*). I will, Persephone, on one condition. Thou must come with me to gather a flower in the meadow, the most beautiful of them all!

Persephone (*serious*). My venerable, wise mother has forbidden me to do that. "Do not listen to the voice of Eros," she said. "Do not gather the flowers in the meadow. If thou disobeyest me, thou wilt be the most wretched of Immortals!"

Eros. I understand. Thy mother will not have thee learn the secrets of earth and hell. Wert thou to breathe the flowers of the meadow, they would be revealed to thee.

Persephone. Dost thou know them?

Eros. I know them all, and, as thou seest, I am only the more youthful and active in consequence. O, daughter of the gods, the abyss has terrors and horrors which heaven knows nothing of, but he

cannot understand heaven who has not passed through earth and hell.

Persephone. Wilt thou enable me to understand them ?

Eros. Yes. Look ! (*He touches the ground with the end of his bow ; a large narcissus appears.*)

Persephone. What a beautiful flower ! It brings back a divine memory, trembling and stirring in my heart. Sometimes when asleep on a peak of my beloved star, gilded with the glory of an eternal sunset, on awaking I have seen, above the purple horizon, a silvery star floating in the pearly bosom of the pale green sky. To me it then seemed as the torch of the immortal spouse, the promise of the gods, divine Dionysus. But the star went down . . . down . . . and the light died away in the distance. This wonderful flower resembles that star.

Eros. I who transform and unite all things, who make the small in the likeness of the great, and of the watery deep the mirror of heaven, who mingle heaven and hell on earth and work out all forms in the depths of the ocean, I have brought back to life thy star from the abyss in the form of a flower, that thou mayst touch and smell as well as pluck it.

The Chorus. Beware lest this magic be a snare !

Persephone. What is the name of this flower ?

Eros. Men call it the narcissus ; I call it Desire. See how it looks at you and turns in your direction. Its white petals quiver as though they were alive ; from its golden heart there escapes a perfume which fills the whole atmosphere with voluptuous pleasure. When thou raisest this magical flower to thy face, in one wonderful and immense picture thou wilt behold the monsters of the abyss, the depths of the earth, and the hearts of men. Nothing will be hidden from thee.

Persephone. O marvellous flower, of enrapturing odour, how my heart beats and my fingers burn as I seize hold of thee. I will breathe thy perfume, I will press thee to my lips and place thee on my heart—though I were to die for it !

(*The ground by her side half opens. From the dark, gaping fissure,* Pluto *is seen slowly rising, seated in a chariot drawn by two black horses. The moment* Persephone *plucks the flower, he seizes her and pulls her violently to his side. In vain does she writhe in his arms, raising a loud cry. The chariot immediately sinks and disappears. The rolling wheels die away in the distance, like subterranean thunder. Groaning and wailing, the nymphs scatter about the wood.* Eros *laughingly makes his escape.*)

The Voice of Persephone (*under the earth*). O! Mother! Help! Help!

Hermes. O Candidates of the Mysteries, whose lives are still clouded over with the fumes of an evil life, such is your history. Remember and meditate on what Empedocles says: "Generation is a terrible destruction which causes the living to pass into the dead. Formerly you lived the true life, then drawn by a charm, you fell into the terrestrial abyss, subdued by the body. Your present is nothing but a fatal dream, the past and the future alone really exist. Learn to remember and to see ahead."

. . . . . .

During this scene, night had fallen, funeral torches were lit between the black cypresses, near the entrance to the small temple, and the spectators silently departed, followed by the wailing chants of the hierophantids, calling: "Persephone! Persephone!" The Lesser Mysteries were at an end. The neophytes had become *mustai*, that is to say, *veiled ones*. They were going to return to their usual occupations, but the great veil of the Mysteries was spread over their eyes. A cloud had intervened between them and the outer world. At the same time there had opened in their mind an inner eye through which they dimly perceived another world

filled with attractive forms, which moved about in the abysmal depths of alternate light and darkness.

The *Greater Mysteries* which followed, and which were also called the *Sacred Orgies*, were only celebrated once every five years, at Eleusis.

The symbolical *fêtes* lasted nine days; on the eighth, the tokens of initiation were distributed to the *mustai;* these consisted of the thyrsus and a basket called a cist, surrounded with ivy leaves. This latter contained mysterious objects, the knowledge of which was to give the secret of life. The basket itself was carefully sealed; it could be opened only at the end of the initiation and in the presence of the hierophant.

Then they abandoned themselves to a state of exultant joy, waved flaming torches in the air, and handed them to one another. That same day, the statue of Dionysus, wreathed with myrtle-leaves, and which was called Iacchos, was carried in procession from Athens to Eleusis. Its arrival at Eleusis proclaimed the great renascence, for it represented the divine spirit penetrating all things, the regenerator of souls, the mediator between earth and heaven.

This time they entered the temple through the mystic door, there to spend the sacred night, or the night of initiation.

First, they entered a large portico in the outer enclosure. There the herald, with terrible threats and crying aloud: "*Eskato Bebeloi!* Away, ye profane!" drove from the spot such intruders as succeeded sometimes in stealthily gliding into the enclosure along with the *mustai*. The latter were made to swear, under penalty of death, that they would reveal nothing they saw. He added: "You have now come to the subterranean threshold of Persephone. To understand the future life and your present condition, the kingdom of death must have been traversed; that is the test of the initiates. To enjoy the light, you must be able to brave the darkness." Then they put on the fawn skin, symbol of the tearing asunder and the laceration of the soul, which has been plunged into bodily life. Finally they extinguished the torches and lamps and entered the subterranean labyrinth.

At first the *mustai* groped about in the darkness. Soon dreadful sounds were heard, noises and groans. The blackness was pierced by flashes of lightning accompanied with thunderclaps. By their light horrible visions were seen; sometimes a monster, a chimæra or a dragon, then a man writhing in the claws of a sphinx, or again a human larva. These apparitions were so sudden that there was not time to distinguish by what artifice they were produced,

and the utter darkness which followed doubled the horror of the situation. Plutarch likens the terror caused by these visions to the condition of a man on his deathbed.

The strangest scene of all, the one bordering on real magic, took place in a crypt where a Phrygian priest, clad in an Asiatic robe, with vertical stripes, red and black in colour, stood before a copper brazier, the flickering light from which dimly lit up the room. With commanding gesture, he forced all to sit down at the entrance, and flung into the brazier large handfuls of narcotic perfumes. The room was soon filled with thick clouds of smoke, and a disordered array of changing forms, both human and animal, could soon be distinguished. At times long serpents could be seen, stretching out into sirens, entangled in endless windings, then again voluptuously arched busts of nymphs, with outstretched arms, changed into bats; charming heads of youths melted away into dogs' muzzles. All these monsters, in turn beautiful and hideous, fluid and aëreal, deceptive and unreal, vanishing no sooner than they appeared, turned about in changing hues with vertiginous movements and crowded round the fascinated *mustai* as though to prevent their passage. From time to time the priest of Cybele extended his short wand right in the midst

of the vapours, and the effluvium of his will seemed to give the multiform circles a whirling motion and disturbed vitality. "Pass along!" said the Phrygian. The *mustai* rose and entered the circle. Most of them felt strange rustlings, others were rapidly touched by invisible hands or violently flung to the ground. Some drew back in terror and returned in the direction from which they had come. Only the boldest passed on, after several attempts, for a strong determination cut short the charm.[1]

. . . . . .

Then they reached a large circular hall through

[1] Contemporary science would see in these facts nothing but simple hallucinations or suggestions. The science of antique esoterism, however, attributed to this kind of phenomenon, which frequently happened in the Mysteries, a value at once subjective and objective. It believed in the existence of elementary spirits devoid of either reason or an individualised soul, semi-conscious, filling the terrestrial atmosphere, the souls of the elements, so to speak. Magic, which is really will power acting in the control of occult forces, makes them visible at times. It is of them that Heraclitus speaks when he says: "Nature is everywhere full of demons." Plato calls them "demons of the elements;" Paracelsus, "elementals." According to this theosophist doctor of the sixteenth century, they are attracted by the magnetic atmosphere of man, become electrified, and are then capable of assuming every shape imaginable. The more enslaved a man is to his passions, the more completely does he become their prey, without any suspicion of the fact. The magus alone tames and makes use of them. They constitute, however, a sphere of deceptive illusion and folly which must be mastered and overcome on one's entrance into the occult world. Bulwer Lytton called them "guardians of the threshold," in his curious novel, *Zanoni*.

which a few torches shed a ghastly light. In the centre stood a single column, a bronze tree whose metallic foliage extended over the whole ceiling.[1] In this foliage were inlaid figures of the chimæra and of the sphinx, owls and harpies and gorgons, speaking images of every terrestrial ill, of every demon that attacks mankind. These monsters, reproduced in shining metal, twine about the branches and seem to be watching their prey from above. On a magnificent throne at the foot of the tree sits Pluto-Aïdoneus, clad in a purple mantle. In his hand is a trident; an anxious look overcasts his brow. By the side of the king of the Infernal Regions, who never smiles, sits his bride, Persephone, tall and graceful. The *mustai* recognise in her the features of the hierophantid, who had already represented the goddess in the Lesser Mysteries. She is still as beautiful as ever, perhaps even more beautiful in her sadness, though how greatly changed beneath her golden diadem, in her mourning robe, with its silver tears. No longer is she the virgin of the Grotto; now she is acquainted with life below, and suffers in consequence. She reigns over the infernal powers, she is queen over the dead,

[1] This is the tree of dreams mentioned by Virgil in the descent of Æneas into the infernal regions in the Sixth Book of the *Æneid*, which reproduces the principal scenes of the Mysteries of Eleusis, with poetical amplifications.

though a stranger in her own empire. A pale smile illumines her face, overcast by the shadow of Hell. Ah! in that smile lies the knowledge of Good and of Evil, the inexpressible charm of a grief that has been felt and is now dumb. Suffering teaches pity; so she welcomes with looks of compassion the *mustai*, who kneel before her and lay wreaths of narcissus at her feet. Then there flashes from her eyes a dying flame, a lost hope, the distant memory of heaven!

Suddenly, at the end of an ascending passage, torches shine forth, and in trumpet tones a voice exclaims: "Welcome, *mustai!* Iacchos has returned! Demeter awaits her daughter. Evohé!" The sonorous subterranean echoes repeat the cry. Persephone sits upright on her throne, as though suddenly starting from a long sleep, under the impulse of a dazzling thought: "Light! Mother! Iacchos!" She makes a forward movement; but Aïdoneus gently touches the hem of her garment and she falls back, like a corpse, on to the throne. Then the torches suddenly flicker away and expire and a voice exclaims: "To die is to be born again!" The *mustai* press along the gallery of the heroes and the demi-gods, to the opening of the subterranean passage, where the Hermes and the torch-bearer await them. Their fawn skins are removed; clad

in fresh linen, they are sprinkled with lustral water, and conducted into the splendidly lit temple, where the hierophant, the high priest of Eleusis, a majestic old man, clothed in purple, receives them.

And now let us listen to Porphyrus, as he relates the supreme initiation of Eleusis :

" Wreathed in myrtle, we enter, along with the other initiates, into the vestibule of the temple, still blind, though the hierophant within will soon open our eyes. First, however—for we must do nothing hurriedly—let us lave ourselves in the sacred water, for it is with clean hands and a pure heart that we are invited to enter the sacred spot. Led before the hierophant, he reads to us from a stone book, things we must not divulge under the penalty of death. I may only say that they are in perfect harmony with the place and the circumstances. You would perhaps smile were you to hear them outside the temple, but here you have no inclination to smile as you listen to the words of the old man and look at the symbols revealed.[1] And you are far from smiling when Demeter confirms, in her special language and her signals, by

[1] The golden objects contained in the cist were : the pine-apple (the symbol of fecundity and of generation) ; the spiral serpent (universal evolution of the soul : fall into matter and redemption by the spirit) ; the egg, recalling the divine sphere or perfection, the aim and end of man.

vivid sparkling lights and clouds piled upon clouds. everything we have seen and heard from her sacred priest; finally the light of a serene wonder fills the temple, we see the shining Elysian fields; then it is not only by an external appearance or a philosophical interpretation, but in fact and reality that the hierophant becomes the creator (δημιουργός) and revealer of all things; the Sun is only his torch-bearer, the Moon, his officiating priest before the altar, and Hermes, his mystic herald. But the final word has been uttered: Konx Om Pax.[1]

The rite is now over, and we are Seers (ἐπόπται) for ever.

And then, what did the chief hierophant say? What sacred, supreme revelation had he to give?

The initiates learned that divine Persephone, whom they had seen in all the terror and punishment of the infernal regions, was the image of the human soul, chained to matter in this life, or given up in the next to even greater torments, if it has been

[1] These mysterious words have no meaning in Greek, proving at any rate that they are very ancient and come from the East. Wilford gives them a Sanscrit origin. *Konx*, from *Kansha*, signifies the object of the strongest desire; *Om*, from *Oum*, the soul of Brahma; and *Pax* from *Pasha*, turn, change, cycle. The final benediction of the hierophant of Eleusis accordingly meant: May thy desires be fulfilled; return to the universal soul!

living a slave to its passions. Its earth life is an expiation or a test of former existences. The soul, however, may purify itself by discipline; it may remember and foresee by the combined effort of reason, intuition, and will, and share beforehand in the great truths of which it must take full and entire possession in the immense beyond. Then only will Persephone become once more the ineffable Virgin, pure and light-giving, distributor of love and joy. Ceres, her mother in the Mysteries, was the symbol of divine Intelligence and of the intellectual principle in man, which the soul must rejoin, in order to attain to perfection.

If Plato, Iamblichus, Proclus, and all the Alexandrian philosophers are to be believed, the *élite* of the initiates had visions of a marvellous and ecstatic nature inside the temple. I have already quoted the testimony of Porphyry; listen now to that of Proclus: "In all initiations and mysteries, the gods (here this word means all orders of spirits) show many forms of themselves and appear in a great variety of shapes, sometimes in a formless light, then again the light assumes a human form, and at times a different one." [1] Hear the following passage from Apuleius: "I ap-

[1] Proclus: *Commentary on the Republic of Plato.*

proached the confines of death, and after reaching the threshold of Proserpine, I returned, borne along through all elements (elementary spirits of earth, water, air, and fire). In the midnight darkness I saw the sun beaming with radiant light and at the same time the lower and higher gods. As I drew near these divinities, I paid them the tribute of pious adoration."

Although such witness is vague and indefinite, it appears to refer to occult phenomena. According to the doctrine of the Mysteries the ecstatic visions of the temple were produced through the purest of elements : spiritual light assimilated to celestial Isis. The oracles of Zoroaster call it, Nature speaking by itself, that is to say, an element by which the Magus gives visible and instantaneous expression to thought and which serves alike as body and raiment for the souls which are the finest thoughts of God. This is the reason the hierophant, if he had power to produce this phenomenon, the bringing of initiates into relation with the souls of heroes and gods (angels and archangels), was at this time likened to the Creator, the Demiurgus ; the Torch-bearer to the Sun, that is to say, to superphysical light ; and the Hermes to the divine word which is his interpreter. Whatever these visions might have

been, antiquity is of one voice regarding the serene exaltation produced by the final revelations of Eleusis. A happiness hitherto unknown, peace beyond human power to bestow, entered the hearts of the initiates. Life seemed to have been conquered, the soul set free, and the redoubtable cycle of existences brought to completion. All met again with unalloyed joy and ineffable certainty in the pure ether of the universal soul.

We have just revived the drama of Eleusis, giving its inner, secret meaning. I have given some indication of the guiding thread leading through this labyrinth, and shown the great unity which dominates its complexity. In wise and sovereign harmony, a strict bond united the varied ceremonies to the divine drama, which formed the ideal centre, the luminous centre of these religious *fêtes*. In this way the initiates gradually identified themselves with action. From being simple spectators, they became actors, finally recognising that the drama of Persephone was being enacted within themselves. What joy and surprise there was in this discovery! If they suffered and struggled with her in this present life, like her they also had the hope of regaining divine felicity, the light of the great Intelligence. The words of the

hierophant, the scenes and revelations of the temple, had given them a foretaste of it all.

It goes without saying that each understood these things according to his degree of culture and intellectual capacity. For, as Plato says—and this is true for all time—few are the inspired, though many bear the thyrsus and the wand. After the time of Alexander, the Eleusinia were, to a certain extent, subjected to pagan decadence, but their sublime basis remained, saving them from the downfall which came over the other temples. By their profoundly sacred doctrines and the splendour of their presentation, the Mysteries held their own for three centuries against a rising Christianity. Then they brought together an *élite* of disciples, who, though not denying that Jesus was a manifestation of heroic and divine order, were unwilling to forget, as the Church of the day was already doing, the ancient science and sacred doctrine. An edict of Theodosius the Great, commanding that the temple of Eleusis be razed to the ground, was needed to bring to an end this august cult, in which the magic of Greek art had incorporated the loftiest teaching of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato.

Nowadays, the refuge of Demeter of old has disappeared, leaving no trace behind, in the silent

Bay of Eleusis, and the butterfly alone, Psyche's winged insect, as it flits across the azure gulf in the warm days of spring, calls back to memory that here, in former times, the human Soul, the great Exile, evoked the gods and recognised her eternal home.

JESUS

THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

THE MISSION OF THE CHRIST

"*I came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.*"—MATTHEW v. 17.

"*The Light was in the world, and the world was made by it, but the world knew it not.*"—JOHN i. 10.

"*As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*"—MATTHEW xxiv. 27.

PREFACE

CRITICISM on the life of Jesus during the past century has been greatly to the fore. A complete account of this criticism will be found in the luminous sketch made by M. Sabatier,[1] in which the entire history and present state of this investigation are given. Sufficient for the moment to refer to the two principal phases supplied by Strauss and Renan, with the object of determining the new point of view I now wish to offer.

Departing from the philosophical school of Hegel to ally himself with the critical and historical one of Bauer, Strauss, without denying the existence of Jesus, endeavoured to prove that his life, as related in the Gospels, is a myth, a legend created by popular imagination, to meet the necessities of a rising Christianity, and in accordance with Old Testament prophecy. His position, a purely negative one, but which he defended with great skill and erudition, has been found true in certain details, but quite untenable in its entirety

[1] *Dictionnaire des Sciences Réligieuses*, par Lichtenberger, tome 7, article "Jesus."

and essential elements. It has, in addition, the grave defect of explaining neither the character of Jesus nor the origin of Christianity. The life of Jesus, according to Strauss, is a planetary system without a sun. One merit, however, must be granted this work, that of having transferred the problem from the region of dogmatic theology to that of textual and historical criticism.

M. Renan's *Vie de Jesus* owes its brilliant success to its lofty æsthetic and literary qualities, as well as to the boldness of the writer, the first who dared make the life of the Christ a problem of human psychology. Has he solved the problem? After the dazzling success of the book, the general opinion of all serious critics has been in the negative. The Jesus of M. Renan begins his career as a gentle dreamer, an enthusiastic but simple-minded moralist; he ends it as a violent thaumaturgist, devoid of all idea of reality. "In spite of all the precautions of the historian," says M. Sabatier, "it is the march of a healthy mind in the direction of madness. The Christ of M. Renan hovers between the calculations of ambition and the dreams of a seer." The fact is that he becomes the Messiah without wishing—almost without knowing—it. He permits himself to be given this name merely to please the apostles and to fulfil the popular wish. It is not with so feeble a faith that a true prophet creates a new religion and changes the soul of the

earth. The life of Jesus, according to M. Renan, is a planetary system illumined by a pallid sun devoid of vivifying magnetism or creative heat.

How did Jesus become the Messiah? That is the primordial question, the solution of which is essential to the right understanding of the Christ; it is also that before which M. Renan hesitated and turned aside. M. Théodore Keim saw that this question must be boldly faced (*Das Leben Jesu*, Zürich, 1875, 3rd edition). His life of Jesus is the most remarkable that has appeared since M. Renan's. It throws on the question all the light given by texts and history esoterically interpreted. But the problem is not one capable of being solved without the aid of intuition and esoteric tradition.

It is by means of this esoteric light, the inner flame of all religions, the central truth of all fruitful philosophy, that I have attempted to reconstruct along its main lines, the life of Jesus, taking into account all the previous historical criticism that has hitherto cleared and prepared the ground. No need to define what I mean by the esoteric point of view, the synthesis of Religion and Science. Concerning the historical and relative value of the Gospels, I have taken the three synoptical Gospels (those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as a basis, and that of John as the arcanum of the esoteric teaching of the Christ, at the same time acknow-

ledging the later language and form, and the symbolical tendency of this Gospel.

All four Gospels, which should be rectified one by another, are equally authentic, though with different claims. Those of Matthew and Mark are precious gospels of letter and fact; therein are to be found the public deeds and words of the Christ. The gentle Luke affords a glimpse of the mystery-meaning beneath the poetical legend-veil; it is the Gospel of the Soul, of Woman, and of Love. Saint John unfolds these mysteries; in his Gospel are to be found the inner depths of the doctrine, the secret teaching, the meaning of the promise, the esoteric reserve. Clement of Alexandria, one of the few Christian bishops who held the key to universal esoterism, rightly named it the Gospel of the Spirit. John has a profound insight into the transcendent truths revealed by the Master, and a great facility in presenting them. Accordingly, his symbol is the Eagle, whose wing cleaves the firmament, and whose flaming eye sounds the depths of space.

JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

CHAPTER I

CONDITION OF THE WORLD AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS

A SOLEMN period of the world's destiny was approaching; the sky was overshadowed with darkness and filled with sinister omens.

In spite of the efforts of the initiates, polytheism, throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe, had terminated only in the downfall of civilisation. The sublime cosmogony of Orpheus, so gloriously chanted by Homer, had not been attained, and the only explanation possible is that human nature found great difficulty in maintaining a certain intellectual altitude. For the great spirits of antiquity, the gods were never anything more than a poetical expression of the subordinated forces

of Nature, a speaking image of its inner organism; it is as symbols of cosmic and animic forces that these gods live indestructible in the consciousness of humanity. This diversity of gods and forces, the initiates thought, was dominated and penetrated by the supreme God or pure Spirit. The principal aim of the sanctuaries of Memphis, Delphi, and Eleusis had been precisely the teaching of this unity of God with the theosophical ideas and moral discipline resulting therefrom.

But the disciples of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato failed before the egoism of the politicians, the sordidness of the sophists, and the passions of the mob. The social and political decomposition of Greece was the consequence of its religious, moral, and intellectual decomposition. Apollo, the Solar Word, the manifestation of the supreme God and the supra-terrestrial world, is silent. No more oracles, no more inspired poets are to be heard! Minerva, Wisdom and Foresight, veils her countenance in presence of her people converted into Satyrs, profaning the mysteries, and insulting the gods in Aristophanic farces on the stage of Bacchus. The very mysteries themselves are corrupted, for sycophants and courtesans are admitted to the Eleusinian rites. . . . When soul becomes blunted, religion falls into idolatry; when thought becomes

materialised, philosophy degenerates into scepticism. Thus we see Lucian, poor microbe born from the corpse of paganism, turn the myths into ridicule, when once Carneades had denied their scientific origin.

Superstitious in religion, agnostic in philosophy, egoistical and divided in politics, reeling under anarchy and fatally abandoned to despotism, Greece had become sadly changed from the time when she transmitted the science of Egypt and the mysteries of Asia in immortal forms of beauty.

If there was one who understood what the world needed, and who endeavoured to restore this need by an effort of heroic genius, that one was Alexander the Great. This legendary conqueror, initiated, as was also his father, Philip, into the mysteries of Samothrace, proved himself even more of an intellectual son of Orpheus than a disciple of Aristotle. Doubtless, the Achilles of Macedonia, who, accompanied by a mere handful of Greeks, crossed Asia as far as India, dreamed of universal empire, but not after the fashion of the Cæsars, by oppression of the people, and the destruction of religion and unfettered science. His grand idea was to reconcile Asia and Europe by a synthesis of religions, supported by scientific authority. Impelled by this thought, he paid homage to the

science of Aristotle, as he did to the Minerva of Athens, the Jehovah of Jerusalem, the Egyptian Osiris, and the Hindu Brahma, recognising, as would a veritable initiate, an identical divinity and wisdom beneath these differing symbols. This new Dionysus possessed a broad sympathy and mighty prophetic insight. Alexander's sword typified the last flash of the Greece of Orpheus, illumining both East and West. The son of Philip died in the intoxication of victory and the glorious accomplishment of his dream, leaving the shreds of his empire to selfish and rapacious generals. But his thought did not die with him; he had founded Alexandria, where Oriental Philosophy, Judaism, and Hellenism were to be fused in the crucible of Egyptian esoterism, until the time might be ripe for the resurrection word of the Christ.

In proportion as Apollo and Minerva, the twin constellations of Greece, paled away on the horizon, the people saw a menacing sign, the Roman She-Wolf, rise in the troubled sky.

What is the origin of Rome? The conspiracy of a greedy oligarchy, in the name of brute force; the oppression of the human intellect, of religion, science, and art, by deified political power: in other words, the contrary of truth, by which a government receives its justification, according to

the supreme principles of science, justice, and economy.[1]

The whole of Roman history is merely the consequence of the iniquitous pact by which the Conscript Fathers declared war, first, against Italy, and afterwards against the whole Roman race. They chose a fitting symbol; for the brazen She-Wolf, with tawny hair erect, and hyena's head turned in the direction of the Capitol, is the image of this government, the demon which will take possession of the Roman soul to the very end.

In Greece, at least, the sanctuaries of Delphi and Eleusis were long respected; at Rome, from the very outset, science and art were rejected. The attempt of the sage Numa, the Etruscan initiate, failed before the suspicious ambition of the Conscript Fathers. He brought with him the Sibylline books, which contained part of the science of Hermes, appointed magistrates elected by the people, distributed territory, and submitted the right of declaring war to the Fecial priests. Accordingly, King Numa, long cherished in the memory of the people, who regarded him as in-

[1] This point of view, in diametrical opposition to the empiric school of Aristotle and Montesquieu, was that of the great initiates, the Egyptian priests, as of Moses and Pythagoras. It had been previously amplified in the *Mission des Juifs* of M. Saint-Yves. See his remarkable chapter on the foundation of Rome.

spired by divine genius, seems to be a historical intervention of sacred science in the government. He does not represent the genius of Rome, but rather that of the Etruscan initiation, which followed the same principles as the school of Memphis and Delphi.

After Numa, the Roman Senate burnt the Sibylline Books, ruined the authority of the flamens, destroyed arbitral institutions, and returned to its old systems in which religion was nothing more than an instrument of public domination. Rome became the hydra which engulfed the peoples and their gods with them. The nations of the earth were gradually reduced to subjection and pillage. The Mamertine prison became filled with kings from North and South. Rome, bent on having no other kings than slaves and charlatans, destroys the final possessors of esoteric tradition in Gaul, Egypt, Judea, and Persia. She pretends to worship the gods, but the only object of her adoration is the She-Wolf. And now, away on the blood-stained dawn, there appears the final offspring of this ravenous creature, the embodiment of the genius of Rome—Cæsar! Rome has conquered all the nations of the earth, Cæsar, her incarnation, arrogates to himself universal power. He aspires not merely to become the ruler of mankind, for, uniting

the tiara with the diadem, he causes himself to be proclaimed Chief Pontiff. After the Battle of Thapsus, deification as a hero is voted him, after that of Munda, divine apotheosis is granted by the Senate ; his statue is erected in the temple of Quirinus, and a college of officiating priests appointed, bearing his name. To crown all in irony and logic, this very Cæsar who deifies himself, denies in the presence of the Senate the immortality of the soul ! Would it be possible to proclaim more openly that there is no longer any other God than Cæsar ?

Under the Cæsars, Rome, inheritor of Babylon, extends her power over the whole world. What has become of the Roman State ? It is engaged in destroying all collective life outside the capital. Military dictatorship is the order of the day in Italy, extortions of governors and tax-collectors in the provinces. Conquering Rome feeds like a vampire on the corpse of a worn-out system.

And now the Roman orgies are freely and publicly paraded with all their bacchanalia of vice and crime. They begin with the voluptuous meeting of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and will be brought to an end with the debaucheries of Messalina and the mad frenzy of Nero. They signalise their presence by a lascivious and public parody of

the mysteries, and are destined to close in the Roman Circus, where nude virgins, martyrs to their faith, are torn to pieces and devoured by savage beasts, amid the plaudits of thousands of spectators.

And yet, among the nations conquered by Rome, there was one which called itself the people of God, whose genius was the very opposite to that of Rome. How comes it that Israel, worn out by intestine strife, crushed by three centuries of slavery, had preserved its indomitable faith? Why did this conquered people rise, prophet-like, to oppose Greek decadence and Roman orgies? Whence did they derive the courage to predict the fall of the masters who had their feet on the throat of the nation, and speak of some vague final triumph, when they themselves were drawing to an irremediable ruin? The reason was, that a great idea, inspired by Moses, lived in the nation. Under Joshua, the twelve tribes had erected a commemorative pillar with the inscription, "This is a testimony between us that Jehovah is God alone."

The law-maker of Israel had made monotheism the corner-stone of his science and social law, as well as of a universal religious idea. He had had the genius to understand that on the triumph of

this idea the future of mankind would depend. To preserve it, he had written a hieroglyphic book, constructed a golden ark, and raised up a people from the nomad dust of the wilderness. Not content with these witnesses to the spiritualistic idea Moses brought down the lightning flash and the thunderbolt from heaven. Against them conspired not only the Moabites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and all the tribes of Palestine, but even the frailties and passions of the Jewish people itself. The Book ceased to be understood by the priesthood; the ark was captured by enemies, numerous were the times when the people almost forgot their mission. Why then, in spite of all, did they remain faithful to this mission? Why had the idea of Moses remained graven on the brow and heart of Israel in letters of fire? To whom is due this exclusive perseverance, this magnificent fidelity amid the vicissitudes of a troubled history, such a fidelity as gave Israel a unique character among the nations? It may boldly be attributed to the prophets and the institution of prophecy; by oral tradition it may be traced back to Moses. The Hebrew people has had *Nabi* at all periods of its history, right to its dispersion. But the institution of prophecy appears first under an organic form at the time of Samuel. He it was who

founded the confraternities of *Nebiim*, those schools of prophets, in the face of a rising royalty and an already degenerate priesthood. He made them austere guardians of the esoteric tradition and the universal religious thought of Moses against the kings, in whom the political idea and national aim was to predominate. In these confraternities were preserved the relics of the science of Moses, the sacred music, the occult art of healing, and finally, the art of divination, exercised by the great prophets with masterly force and abnegation.

Divination has existed under the most diverse forms among all the peoples of the ancient cycle; but prophecy in Israel possesses an amplitude, a loftiness and authority, belonging to the intellectual and spiritual realm in which monotheism keeps the human soul. Prophecy, represented by the theologians, literally, as the direct communication of a personal God, denied by naturalistic philosophy as pure superstition, is in reality nothing but the superior manifestation of the universal laws of the Spirit. "The general truths which govern the world," says Ewald, in his fine work on the prophets, "in other terms, *the thoughts of God*, are immutable and incapable of attack, quite independent of the fluctuations of things, and of the will and action of men. Man is originally intended to

participate in them, and translate them freely into acts. But for the Word of the Spirit to enter into carnal man, he must be fundamentally influenced by the great commotion of history. Then the Eternal Truth springs forth like a flash of light. This is why we so often read in the Old Testament that Jehovah is a living God. When man listens to the divine call, a new life is created in him ; now he no longer feels himself alone, but in communion with God and all truth, ready to proceed eternally from one verity to another. In this new life, his thought becomes one with the universal will. He possesses a clear grasp of the present, and entire faith in the final success of the divine idea. The man who experiences this is a prophet, *i.e.* he feels himself irresistibly impelled to manifest himself before others as a representative of God. *His thought becomes vision*, and this superior might which forces the truth from his soul, at times with heart-breaking anguish, constitutes the prophetic element. *The prophetic manifestations, throughout history, have been the thunderbolts and lightning flashes of truth.*"[1]

From this spring, those giants, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, drew their might. Deep in their caves or in the palaces of the kings, they

[1] Ewald, *Die Propheten* : Introduction.

were indeed sentinels of Jehovah, and, as Elisha said to his master Elijah, "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Often do they foretell with prophetic vision the death of kings, the fall of kingdoms, and the punishments to be visited on Israel. At times they are mistaken. The prophetic torch, though lit by the sun of divine truth, will vacillate and darken in their hands under the influence of national passion. But never do they waver concerning moral truths, the real mission of Israel, the final triumph of justice to mankind. As true initiates, they preach their scorn of outer worship, the abolition of sacrifices of blood, the purification of the soul, and the practice of love. It is with regard to the final triumph of monotheism, its liberating and peace-bringing rôle to all nations, that their vision is truly remarkable. The most frightful misfortunes that can strike a nation, foreign invasion, captivity in Babylon, cannot shake their faith. Listen to what Isaiah said during the invasion of Sennacherib:—

"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.

"That ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

"For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

"And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

"For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

"For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

"They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination and the mouse shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.

"For I know their work and their thoughts: it shall come that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory."[1]

[1] Isaiah lxvi. 10–18.

It is only before the tomb of the Christ that this vision begins to find realisation, but who could deny its prophetic truth when thinking of the part Israel played in the history of mankind?

No less firm than this faith in the future of Jerusalem, in its moral grandeur and religious universality, is the faith of the prophets in a Saviour or a Messiah. They all speak of him; the incomparable Isaiah is still the one whose vision is clearest, and who depicts it with greatest force in bold, lofty language:—

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots;

"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

"And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."[1]

Before this vision, the gloomy soul of the prophet becomes calm and clear, as does a tempest-troubled sky after a storm. For now it is indeed the image of the Galilean which is present before his inner vision:—

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he

[1] Isaiah xi. 1–5.

opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

" He was taken from prison and from judgement : and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken." [1]

For eight centuries the thunder-words of the prophets caused the idea and image of the Messiah to hover above all national dissensions and misfortunes, at times under the form of a terrible avenger, and again as an angel of mercy. The Messianic idea, tenderly nurtured under Assyrian despotism in Babylonian exile, and brought to light under Persian domination, continued to grow under the reign of the Seleucides and the Maccabees. When the Roman rule and the reign of Herod came, the Messiah was alive in the consciousness of all. The great prophets had seen him as a great man, a martyr, a veritable son of God . . . the people, faithful to the Judaic idea, imagined him as a David, a Solomon, or a new Maccabeus. Whatever he might be, this restorer of Israel's greatness was believed in and expected by all. Such is the might of prophetic action.

Thus we see that just as Roman history ends in

[1] Isaiah liii. 2–8.

Cæsar, along the instinctive path and infernal logic of Destiny, so the history of Israel leads freely to the Christ along the conscious path and divine logic of Providence, manifested in its visible representatives, the prophets. Evil is fatally condemned to contradict and destroy itself, for it is the False; but Good, in spite of all obstacles, engenders light and harmony after a lapse of time, for it is the fruit of Truth. From her triumph Rome obtained nothing but Cæsarism, from her downfall Israel gave birth to the Messiah.

A vague expectancy hung over the nations. In the excess of its evil all humanity had a presentiment of a saviour. For centuries mythology had dreamt of a divine child. The temples spoke of him in mystery; astrologers calculated his coming; frenzied sibyls had loudly proclaimed the downfall of pagan gods. The initiates had announced that some day the world would be governed by one of their own, a Son of God.[1] The world was expecting a spiritual king, one who would be understood by the poor and lowly.

The great Æschylus, son of a priest of Eleusis, was almost killed by the Athenians for daring to say in the crowded theatre, by the mouth of his

[1] Such is the esoteric signification of the beautiful legend of the magi coming from the far East to worship the child of Bethlehem.

Prometheus, that the reign of Jupiter-Destiny would come to an end. Four centuries later, under the shadow of the throne of Augustus, the gentle Virgil announces a new age, and dreams of a marvellous child—

"Ultima Cumaei venit jam carminis aetas;
Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo.
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum
Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,
Casta, fave, Lucina; tuus jam regnat Apollo.
. . . Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
Terrasque, tractusque maris, coelumque profundum,
Aspice venturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo."[1]

When will this child be born? From what divine world will this soul come? In what brilliant lightning-flash of love will it descend to earth? By

[1] Virgil, Eclogue 4:—

"The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,
Renews its finished course, Saturnian times
Roll round again, and mighty years begun
From their first orb in radiant circles run,
The base degenerate iron offspring ends,
A golden progeny from Heaven descends:
Oh! Chaste Lucina! Speed the mother's pains,
And haste the glorious birth, thy own Apollo reigns.
. . . . . .
See, labouring Nature calls thee to sustain
The nodding frame of Heaven and Earth and main:
See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air;
And joyful ages from behind in crowding ranks appear
To sing thy praise. . . ."

—DRYDEN.

what wonderful purity, what superhuman energy will it remember the abandoned heaven? By what mightier effort will it return from the depths of its earthly consciousness, taking with it mankind in its train?

No one could have told, but all were waiting and expecting. . . . Herod the Great, the Idumean usurper, the protégé of Augustus Cæsar, was then at the point of death in his Cyprian château at Jericho, after a sumptuous and blood-stained reign, which had covered Judea with splendid palaces and human hecatombs. He was dying from a terrible malady, decomposition of the blood, hated by all, torn with fury and remorse, haunted by the spectres of his innumerable victims, amongst whom were numbered his innocent wife, the noble Marian, of Maccabee blood, and three of his own sons. The seven women of his harem had fled the presence of the royal phantom. His very bodyguard had abandoned him. Impassive by the side of the dying wretch sat his sister Salome, his evil genius, the instigator of his foulest crimes. With diadem on brow, and breast sparkling with precious stones, she kept watch, waiting for the king's last breath, when she in her turn would seize the reins of sovereignty.

Thus died the last king of the Jews. At this very moment had just been born the future spiritual

king of humanity,[1] and the few initiates of Israel were silently preparing for his reign in profound humility and silence.

[1] Herod died in the fourth year before our era. Calculations of the critics are now generally unanimous in giving this date also as the birth of Jesus. See Keim, *Das Leben Jesu*.

CHAPTER II

MARY—FIRST DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS

JEHOSHOUA, whom we call Jesus, from the Greek form of his name, was probably born in Nazareth.[1] It was certainly in this abandoned corner of Galilee that his childhood was passed, and the first, the greatest, of the Christian mysteries accomplished: the appearance of the soul of the Christ. He was the son of Miriam, or Mary, wife of the carpenter Joseph, a Galilean woman of noble origin, affiliated to the Essenes.

Legend has woven a tissue of marvels around the birth of Jesus. If legend gives refuge to numerous superstitions, it also at times conceals psychic truths but little known, for they are above the perception of the mass of mankind. One fact may be learned from the legendary history of Mary, that Jesus was a child consecrated before his birth to a prophetic mission by the wish of his mother.

[1] It is by no means impossible that Jesus might chance to have been born in Bethlehem. But this tradition seems to form part of the cycle of later legends relating to the holy family and the infancy of the Christ.

The same thing is related of several heroes and prophets of the Old Testament. These sons thus dedicated to God were called Nazarenes. Touching this point, it is interesting to refer to the histories of Samson and of Samuel. An angel announces to Samson's mother that she will soon be with child, and will give birth to a son, whose head the razor shall not touch. In the case of Samuel, it is the mother who herself requests a child from God (*Cf.* Judges xiii. 3–5; and 1 Samuel i. 11–20).

Now SAM-U-EL, in its original root signification, means, Inner glory of God. The mother, feeling herself, as it were, illumined by the one she incarnated, considered him as the ethereal essence of the Lord.

These passages are extremely important, as they introduce us to the esoteric, the constant and living tradition in Israel, and, along this channel, into the real signification of the Christian legend. Elkana, the husband, is indeed the earthly father of Samuel in the flesh, but the Eternal is his heavenly Father in the Spirit. The figurative language of Judaic monotheism here masks the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. The woman initiate appeals to a superior soul, demanding to receive it into her womb, and bring

to birth a prophet. This doctrine, considerably veiled by the Jews, and completely absent from their official worship, formed part of the secret tradition of the initiates. It appears in the prophets. Jeremiah affirms it in the following terms: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."[1]

Jesus will say the same to the scandalised Pharisees, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."[2]

How much of this can we apply in the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus? It appears that, in the first Christian communities, Jesus had been regarded as a son of Mary and Joseph, since Matthew gives us the genealogical tree of Joseph to prove that Jesus can trace his descent from David. At a later date, legend, anxious to show the supernatural origin of the Christ, wove her web of gold and azure: the history of Joseph and Mary, the Annunciation, and even the infancy of Mary in the temple.[3]

[1] Jeremiah i. 4.

[2] John viii. 58.

[3] Apocryphal Gospel of Mary and of the Saviour's Childhood, published by Tischendorff.

An attempt to discover the esoteric signification of Jewish tradition and Christian legend would lead one to say that the action of Providence, or the influx of the spiritual world which co-operates in the birth of any man, whoever he be, is more powerful and evident at the birth of all men of genius, whose appearance can in no way be explained by the sole law of physical atavism. This influx reaches its greatest intensity in the case of one of those divine prophets destined to change the face of the world. The soul, chosen for a divine mission, comes from a divine world ; it comes freely and consciously, but that it may enter upon an earthly life a chosen vessel is needed, and the appeal of a highly gifted mother, who from the attitude of her moral being, the desire of her soul, and the purity of her life, has a presentiment, attracts and incarnates into her very blood and flesh the soul of the Redeemer, destined in the eyes of men to become a son of God. Such is the profound truth beneath the ancient idea of the Virgin-Mother. The Hindoo genius had already given expression to this idea in the legend of Krishna. The Gospels of Matthew and of Luke have rendered it with an even more admirable simplicity and poetic instinct.

" To the soul which comes from heaven, birth

is a death," Empedocles had said 500 years B.C. However sublime the spirit be, once imprisoned in flesh, it temporarily loses the remembrance of all its past ; once engaged in corporal life, the development of its earthly consciousness is subjected to the laws of the world in which it incarnates. It falls under the force of the elements. The higher its origin, the greater will be the effort to regain its dormant powers, its celestial innatenesses, and to become conscious of its mission.

Profound and tender souls need silence and peace to spring into manifestation. Jesus passed his early years amid the calm of Galilee. His first impressions were gentle, austere, and serene. His birthplace resembled a corner of heaven, dropped on the side of a mountain. The village of Nazareth has changed but little with the flight of time.[1] Its houses, rising in tiers under the rock, resembled—so travellers say—white cubes scattered about in a forest of pomegranate, vine, and fig trees, whilst myriads of doves filled the heavens. Around this nest of verdant freshness floats the pure mountain air, whilst on the heights

[1] See the masterly description of Galilee by M. Renan in his *Vie de Jésus*, and the no less remarkable one of M. E. Melchior de Vogué in his *Voyage en Syrie et en Palestine.*

may be seen the open, clear horizon of Galilee. Add to this imposing background the quiet, solemn home-life of a pious, patriarchal family. The strength of Jewish education lay always in the unity of law and faith, as well as in the powerful organisation of the family dominated by the national and religious idea. The paternal home was a kind of temple for the child. Instead of the grinning frescoes, the nymphs and fauns which adorned the atrium of the Greek houses, such as could be seen at Sephoris and Tiberias, there could be found in the Jewish houses only passages from the laws and the prophets, the stern, rigid texts standing out in Chaldean characters above the doors and upon the walls. But the union of father and mother in mutual love of their children illumined and warmed the house with a distinctly spiritual life. It was there Jesus received his early instruction, and first became acquainted with the Scriptures under the teaching of his parents. From his earliest childhood the long strange destiny of the people of God appeared before him in the periodic feasts and holy days celebrated in family life by reading, song, and prayer. At the Feast of Tabernacles, a shed, made of myrtle and olive branches, was erected in the court or on the roof of the house in memory of

the nomad patriarchs of bygone ages. The seven-branched candlestick was lit, and there were produced the rolls of papyrus from which the secret history was read aloud. To the child's mind, the Eternal was present, not merely in the starry sky, but even in this candlestick, the reflex of his glory, in the speech of the father and the silent love of the mother. Thus Jesus was made acquainted with the great days in Israel's history, days of joy and sorrow, of triumph and exile, of numberless afflictions and eternal hope. The father gave no reply to the child's eager and direct questions. But the mother, raising those dreamy eyes from beneath their long dark lashes, and catching her son's questioning look, said to him, "The Word of God lives in his prophets alone. Some day the wise Essenes, solitary wanderers by Mount Carmel and the Dead Sea, will give thee an answer."

We may also imagine the child Jesus amongst his young companions, exercising over them the strange prestige given by a precocious intelligence joined to active sympathy and the feeling of justice. We follow him to the synagogue, where he heard the Scribes and Pharisees discuss together, and where he himself was to exercise his dialectical powers. We see him quickly repelled by the arid

teachings of these doctors of the law, who tortured the letter to such an extent as to do away with the spirit. And again, we see him brought into contact with pagan life as he visited the wealthy Sephoris, capital of Galilee, residence of Antipas, guarded by Herod's mercenaries, Gauls, Thracians, and barbarians of every kind. In one of those frequent journeys to visit Jewish families, he might well have pushed on to a Phœnician town, one of those veritable hives of human beings, swarming with life, by the seaside. He would see from afar the low temples, with their thick sturdy columns, surrounded with dark groves, whence issued the songs of the priestesses of Astarte, to the doleful accompaniment of the flute; their voluptuous shrieks, piercing as a cry of pain, would awaken in his heart a deep groan of anguish and pity. Then Mary's son returned to his beloved mountains with a feeling of deliverance. He mounted the steeps of Nazareth, gazing around on the vast horizon towards Galilee and Samaria, and cast lingering eyes on Carmel, Gilboa, Tabor, and Sichem, old-standing witnesses of the patriarchs and prophets.

However powerful might have been the impressions of the outer world on the soul of Jesus, they all grew pale before the sovereign and inexpres-

sible truth in his inner world. This truth was expanding in the depths of his nature, like some lovely flower emerging from a dark pool. It resembled a growing light which appeared to him when alone in silent meditation. At such times men and things, whether near or far away, appeared as though transparent in their essence. He read thoughts and saw souls; then, in memory, he caught glimpses, as though through a thin veil, of divinely beautiful and shining beings bending over him, or assembled in adoration of a dazzling light. Wonderful visions came in his sleep, or interposed themselves between himself and reality by a veritable duplication of his consciousness. In these transports of rapture which carried him from zone to zone as though towards other skies, he at times felt himself attracted by a mighty dazzling light, and then plunged into an incandescent sun. These ravishing experiences left behind in him a spring of ineffable tenderness, a source of wonderful strength. How perfect was the reconciliation he felt with all beings, in what sublime harmony was he with the universe! But what was this mysterious light—though even more familiar and living than the other—which sprang forth from the depths of his nature, carrying him away to the most distant tracts of space, and yet

uniting him by secret vibrations with all souls? Was it not the source of souls and worlds?

He named it: His Father in Heaven.[1]

This primitive feeling of unity with God in the light of Love, is the first, the great revelation of Jesus. An inner voice told him to hide it deep in his heart; all the same, it was to give light to his whole life. It gave him an invincible feeling of certainty, made him at once gentle and indomitable; converted his thought into a diamond shield, and his speech into a sword of flame.

Besides, this profoundly secret, mystical life was united with a perfect clearness on matters of everyday life. Luke shows him at the age of twelve years as "increasing in strength, grace, and wisdom." The religious consciousness was, in Jesus, innate, absolutely independent of the outer world. His prophetic and Messianic conscious-

[1] Mystical annals of all times show that moral or spiritual truths of a superior order have been perceived by certain highly endowed souls, without reasoning, simply by inner contemplation and under the form of a vision. This is a psychical phenomenon imperfectly known to modern science, but still an incontestable fact. Catherine de Sienne, daughter of a poor dyer, at the age of four years, saw visions of an extremely remarkable nature. Swedenborg, man of science, calm observer and reasoner, began at the age of forty years, and in perfect health, to have visions which had no relation with his previous life. I do not pretend to place these phenomena on exactly the same plane as those which took place in the consciousness of Jesus, but simply to establish the universality of an inner perception, independent of the bodily senses.

ness could only be awakened by outer circumstances, by the life of his age, in short, by special initiation and long inner elaboration. Traces of this are found in the Gospels and elsewhere.

The first great shock came to him during a journey to Jerusalem with his parents, as related by Luke. This town, the pride of Israel, had become the centre of Jewish aspirations. Its misfortunes had had no other effect than to exalt the minds of men. Under the Seleucides and Maccabees, first by Pompey and finally by Herod, Jerusalem had been subjected to the most terrible of sieges. Blood had been shed in torrents ; the Roman legions had butchered the people in its streets, and innumerable crucifixions had polluted the surrounding heights. After such horrors, and the humiliation following on the Roman occupation, after decimating the Sanhedrim and reducing the pontiff to a mere trembling slave, Herod, as though in irony, had rebuilt the temple with more magnificent pomp and glory than ever. Jerusalem remained, as before, the holy city. Had not Isaiah, the favourite author of Jesus, named it "the bride, before whom the people shall bow down"? He had said, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wast-

ing nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise."[1] To see Jerusalem and the Temple of Jehovah was the dream of all Jews, especially since Judæa had become a Roman province. They journeyed hither from Perea, Galilee, Alexandria, and Babylon. On the way, whether in the wilderness under the waving palms, or near the wells, they cast longing eyes, as they sang their psalms, in the direction of the hill of Zion. A strange feeling of oppression must have come over the soul of Jesus, when, on his first pilgrimage, he saw the city girt around with lofty walls, standing there on the mountain, like a gloomy fortress, the Roman amphitheatre of Herod at its gates, the Antonia tower dominating the temple, and Roman legions—lance in hand—keeping watch from the heights. He ascended the temple steps, and admired the beauty of those marble porticoes, along which walked the Pharisees in sumptuous flowing garments. After crossing the Gentiles', he proceeded to the women's court, and, mingling with the crowd of Israelites, drew near the Nicanor gate, and the three-cubit balustrade, behind which were to be seen priests in sacerdotal robes of purple and violet, shining with gold and precious

[1] Isaiah lx. 3, 18.

stones, officiating there in front of the sanctuary, sacrificing bulls and goats, and sprinkling the blood over the people as they pronounced a blessing. All this bore no resemblance to the temple of his dreams, or the heaven in his heart.

Then he descended again into the more populous quarters of the town, where he saw beggars pallid with hunger, and whose faces were torn with anguish ; a veritable reflection of the tortures and crucifixions accompanying the late wars. Leaving the city by one of the gates, he wandered among those stony valleys and gloomy ravines forming the quarries, pools, and tombs of the kings, and converting Jerusalem into a veritable sepulchre. There he saw maniacs issue from the caves, shrieking out blasphemies against living and dead alike. Then, descending a broad flight of stones to the pool of Siloam, he saw stretched out at the water's brink lepers, paralytics, and wretches, covered with ulcers and sores, in the most abject misery. An irresistible impulse compelled him to look deep into their eyes, and drink in all their grief and pain. Some asked him for help, others were gloomy and hopeless, others again, with senses numbed, seemed to have done with suffering. But then how long had they been there to have come to such a state ?

Then Jesus said to himself: "Of what use are these priests, this temple and these sacrifices, since they can afford no relief to such terrible suffering?" And, of a sudden, like an overwhelming torrent, he felt pouring into his heart the grief and pains of this town and its inhabitants—of the whole of humanity. He understood now that a happiness he could not share with others was absolutely impossible. These looks of despair were never more to leave his memory. Human Suffering, a sad-faced bride, would henceforth accompany him everywhere, whispering in his ear: "I will never leave thee more!"

His soul full of anguish, he left Jerusalem, and proceeded towards the open peaks of Galilee. A cry leapt forth from the depths of his heart: "Father in Heaven! Grant that I may know, and heal and save!"

CHAPTER III

THE ESSENES—JOHN THE BAPTIST—THE TEMPTATION

WHAT he wished to know he could learn from none other than the Essenes.

The Gospels have maintained perfect silence as to the deeds of Jesus, previous to his meeting with John the Baptist, through whom, according to them, he in some way took possession of his ministry. Immediately afterwards he makes his appearance in Galilee with a clearly defined doctrine, the assurance of a prophet, and the consciousness of the Messiah. But evidently this bold and premeditated début was preceded by the long development of a veritable initiation. No less certain is it that this initiation must have taken place in the sole association in Israel, which, at that time, preserved the real traditions of the prophets and adopted their mode of living. There can be no doubt of this among those who, rising above the superstition of literal interpretation, have the courage to discover how things are linked together

by their spirit. This arises not merely from the intimate relations seen to exist between the doctrine of Jesus and that of the Essenes, but even from the very silence kept by the Christ and His disciples concerning this sect. Why does he who attacks with unparalleled courage all the religious sects of his day, never mention the Essenes? And why do neither the apostles nor evangelists speak of them? Evidently because they considered the Essenes as belonging to themselves, as being linked with them by the oath of the mysteries, and linked to the sect of the Christians.

The Order of the Essenes constituted in the time of Jesus the final remnant of those brotherhoods of prophets organised by Samuel. The despotism of the rulers of Palestine, the jealousy of an ambitious and servile priesthood, had forced them to take refuge in silence and solitude. They no longer struggled as did their predecessors, but contented themselves with preserving their traditions. They had two principal centres, one in Egypt, on the banks of Lake Maoris, the other in Palestine, at Engaddi, near the Dead Sea. The name of Essenes they had adopted came from the Syrian word "Asaya," physican—in Greek, therapeutes; for their only acknowledged ministry with regard to the public was that of healing disease both

physical and moral. "They studied with great diligence," says Josephus, "certain medical writings dealing with the occult virtues of plants and minerals."[1]

Some of them possessed the gift of prophecy, as, *e.g.*, Menahim, who had prophesied to Herod that he should reign. "They serve God," said Philo, "with great piety, not by offering victims but by sanctifying the spirit; avoiding towns, they devote themselves to the arts of peace; not a single slave is to be found among them; they are all free and work for one another."[2] The rules of the Order were strict; in order to enter, a year's novitiate was necessary. If one had given sufficient proofs of temperance, he was admitted to the ablutions, though without entering into relations with the masters of the Order. Tests, extending over another two years, were necessary before being received into the brotherhood. They swore "by terrible oaths" to observe the rules of the Order and to betray none of its secrets. Then only did they participate in the common repasts, which were celebrated with great solemnity and constituted the inner worship of the Essenes.

[1] Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," xxx. 2, &c.; "Antiquities," xiii. 5–9; xviii. 1–5.

[2] Philo, "On the Contemplative Life."

The garment they had worn during these repasts they looked upon as sacred and to be removed before resuming work. These fraternal love-feasts, primitive form of the Supper instituted by Jesus, began and ended by prayer. The first interpretation of the sacred books of Moses and the prophets was here given. But the explanation of the texts allowed of three significations, just as there were three degrees of initiation. Very few attained to the highest degree. All this wonderfully resembles the organisation of the Pythagoreans,[1] but certainly it was almost the same amongst the ancient prophets, for it is to be found wherever initiation has existed. It must be added that the Essenes professed the essential dogma of the Orphic and Pythagorean doctrine; that of the pre-existence of the soul, the consequence and reason of its immortality. "The soul," they said, "descending from the most subtle ether, and attracted into the body by a certain natural charm (*ἰυγγί τινι φυσικῇ*), remains

[1] Points in common between Essenes and Pythagoreans: Prayer at sunrise; linen garments; fraternal love-feasts; one year's noviti-ate; three degrees of initiation; organisation of the Order and community of possessions managed by trustees; the law of silence; the oath of the mysteries; the division of instruction into three parts: (1) Science of the universal principles of Theogony, what Philo calls Logic; (2) Physics or Cosmogony; (3) Morals, *i.e.* everything dealing with man, the conscience to which the healers specially devoted themselves.

there as in a prison; freed from the bonds of the body, as from a long servitude, it joyfully takes its flight" (Josephus, *A. J.*, ii. 8).

Among the Essenes, the brothers, properly so called, lived under a community of property, and in a condition of celibacy, cultivating the ground, and, at times, educating the children of strangers. The married Essenes formed a class affiliated and under subjection to the other. Silent, gentle, and grave, they were to be met with here and there, cultivating the arts of peace. Carpenters, weavers, vine-planters, or gardeners, never gunsmiths or merchants. Scattered in small groups about the whole of Palestine, and in Egypt, even as far as Mount Horeb, they offered one another the most complete hospitality. Thus we see Jesus and his disciples journeying from town to town, and from province to province, and always certain of finding shelter and lodging. "The Essenes," said Josephus, "were of an exemplary morality, they forced themselves to suppress passion and anger; always benevolent, peaceable, and trustworthy. Their word was more powerful than an oath, which, in ordinary life, they looked upon as superfluous, and almost as perjury. They endured the most cruel of tortures with admirable steadfastness of soul and smiling countenance rather than violate the

slightest religious precept." Indifferent to the outward pomp of worship at Jerusalem, repelled by the harshness of the Sadducees, and the prayers of the Pharisees, as well as by the pedantry of the synagogue, Jesus was attracted towards the Essenes by natural affinity.[1]

The premature death of Joseph set entirely free Mary's son, now grown into a man. His brothers could continue the father's trade and supply all family needs, so Mary gave him permission to leave secretly for Engaddi. Welcomed as a brother and one of the elect, he rapidly acquired over his very masters an invincible ascendancy, by reason of his superior faculties, his ardent love, and an indescribable, divine element manifested throughout his entire being. From the Essenes he received what they alone could give him: the esoteric tradition of the prophets, and by its means, his own historical and religious tendency or trend. He came to understand how wide a gulf separated the official Jewish doctrine from the ancient wisdom of the initiates, the veritable mother of religions, though ever persecuted by Satan, *i.e.* by

[1] Points in common between the doctrines of the Essenes and those of Jesus: Love of one's neighbour, emphasised as one's first duty; prohibition of the oath as witnesses to truth; hatred of lying; meekness; institution of the Supper, borrowed from the fraternal love-feasts of the Essenes, but with a new signification, that of sacrifice.

the spirit of evil, of egoism, hatred, and denial, allied with absolute political power and priestly imposture. He learned that Genesis, under the seal of its symbolism, concealed a theogony and cosmogony as far removed from the literal signification as is the profoundest truth of science from a child's fable. He contemplated the days of Aelohim, or the eternal creation by emanation of the elements and the formation of the worlds, the origin of the floating souls, and their return to God by progressive existences or generations of Adam. He was struck with the grandeur of the thought of Moses, whose intention had been to prepare the religious unity of the nations by establishing the worship of the one God, and incarnating this idea into a people.

Afterwards he was instructed in the doctrine of the divine Word, already taught by Krishna in India, by the priests of Osiris, by Orpheus and Pythagoras in Greece, and known to the prophets under the name of *the Mysteries of the Son of Man and of the Son of God.* According to this doctrine, the highest manifestation of God is man, who, in constitution, form, organs, and intelligence is the image of the Universal Being, whose faculties he possesses. In the earthly evolution of humanity, however, God is scattered,

split up, and mutilated, so to speak, in the multiplicity of men and of human imperfections. In it he suffers, struggles, and tries to find himself, he is the Son of Man, the perfect Man, the Man-Type, the profoundest thought of God, remaining hidden in the infinite abyss of his desire and power. And yet at certain epochs, when humanity is to be saved from some terrible gulf, and set on a higher plane, a chosen one identifies himself with divinity, attracts it to himself by strength, wisdom, and love, and manifests it anew to men. Then, divinity, by the virtue and breath of the Spirit, is completely present in him: the Son of Man becomes the Son of God, and his living word. In other ages and among other nations, there had already appeared sons of God, but since Moses, none had arisen in Israel. All the prophets were expecting this Messiah. The Seers even said that this time he would call himself the Son of Woman, of the Heavenly Isis, of the divine light which is the Bride of God, for the light of Love would shine in him, above every other light, with a dazzling splendour, hitherto unknown on earth.

All these secrets which the patriarch of the Essenes unfolded to the young Galilean on the solitary banks of the Dead Sea, in lonely Engaddi,

seemed to him wonderful, but yet known. It was with no ordinary emotion that he heard the chief of the Order comment on the words still to be read in the Book of Henoch: "From the beginning the Son of Man was in the mystery. The Father kept him near his mighty presence, and *manifested him to his elect.* . . . But the Kings shall be afraid and shall prostrate themselves to the ground with terror, when they shall see the *Son of Woman* seated on the throne of his glory. . . . Then the elect shall summon all the forces of heaven, all the saints from on high and the power of God; and the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Ophanim, all the angels of *Might*, all the angels of the *Lord, i.e.* of the Elect and *of the other Might*, serving on earth and above the waters, shall raise their voices."[1]

At these revelations the words of the prophets, read and meditated upon times innumerable, appeared before the eyes of the Nazarene, with a profound and terrible light, like lightning flashes in the night. Who could this Elect be, and when would he appear before Israel?

[1] Book of Henoch, chaps. xlviii. and lxi. This passage shows that the doctrine of the Word, the Trinity found in the Gospel of John, existed in Israel long before the time of Jesus, and came from the very depths of esoteric prophecy. In the Book of Henoch, the Lord of Spirits represents the Father, the Elect represents the Son, and the other Might, the Holy Ghost.

Jesus passed a series of years among the Essenes. He submitted to their discipline, studied with them the secrets of nature, and the occult power of healing. To develop his spirit, he gained entire mastery over his body. Not a day passed without self-questioning and meditation on the destiny of humanity. That was a memorable night for the Order of the Essenes and the new adept, when he received in profoundest secrecy the superior initiation of the fourth degree, the one granted only in the special case of a prophetic mission, requested by the brother, and confirmed by the Elders. A meeting was held in a cave cut into the mountain, and resembling a vast hall with an altar of stone seats. The chief of the Order was there with a few Elders. Sometimes two or three initiates, prophetesses also, Essenes, were admitted to the mysterious ceremony. Bearing torches and branches of palm trees, they greeted the new Initiate who was clothed in a robe of white linen, as "Bridegroom and King," the one they had seen in vision, and whom they now looked upon perhaps for the last time! Then, the chief of the Order, generally an old centenarian (Josephus states that the Essenes lived to an advanced age) offered him *the golden chalice* as a symbol of the final initiation, containing *the wine of the Lord's vineyard*, symbol of divine

inspiration. Some said that Moses and the seventy had drunk therefrom; others trace it back from Abraham, who received from Melchisedek this very initiation under the elements of bread and wine.[1] The Elders never offered the cup to any one in whom they had not recognised, with distinct certainty, the signs of a prophetic mission. But no one could define this mission, he was to find it himself; such is the law of the initiates—nothing from without, everything from within. Henceforth he was free, master of his own actions, liberated from the Order, a very hierophant, obedient to the impulses of the spirit which could fling him into the depths or transport him on high, far above scenes of torture and human passion.

When after the songs and prayers and sacramental words of the Elder the Nazarene took the cup, a pale ray of the sun shooting through a rugged mountain crag ran in and about the torches and the flowing white garments of the Essene prophetesses. They too shuddered as they saw it fall on the Galilean's beautiful countenance, now overshadowed with a look of infinite sorrow. Were his thoughts dwelling on the poor wretches of Siloam; had he already, in that ever-present anguish, caught a glimpse of the path he was to traverse?

[1] Genesis xiv. 18.

About this time, John the Baptist was preaching on the banks of the Jordan. He was not an Essene, but a prophet of the people, belonging to the sturdy race of Judah. Driven into the wilderness by a fierce unyielding piety, he had there, in prayer, fasting, and mortification, lived a life of the strictest asceticism. Over his bare sun-tanned skin he wore a camel's-hair cloak, symbol of the penitence he wished to impose both on himself and on his people. Deeply did he feel Israel's distress, and ardently did he await deliverance. According to the Jewish idea, he imagined the Messiah would soon come as an Avenger and a Judge; that, like another Maccabæus, he would rouse the people to revolt, drive out the Romans, punish the guilty, and finally enter Jerusalem in triumph, where, in peace and justice, he would re-establish the kingdom of Israel over all nations. He announced to the multitudes, who eagerly drank in his words, that the time was nigh for the coming of this Messiah, adding that they must prepare for it in a spirit of true repentance. Adopting the Essenian custom of ablution and transforming it, he had looked upon baptism in the Jordan as a visible symbol, a public accomplishment of the inner purification he insisted upon. This new ceremony, this earnest preaching to immense crowds of people, with the wilderness as

a background, and beside the sacred waters of the Jordan, near the rugged mountains of Peraea and Judaea, seized hold of the imagination, and attracted multitudes. It recalled the glorious days of the prophets of old, and gave the people what the temple could not give them, an inner shock, and, after the terrors of repentance had passed, a vague though mighty hope. They came from every part of Palestine, and even from more distant lands, to hear the desert-saint who foretold the coming of the Messiah. The populace, attracted by his message, remained there in camps, for weeks at a time, listening to him daily, unwilling to depart, awaiting the Messiah's coming. Many asked to take up arms under his command, and to recommence the holy war. Herod Antipas and the priests of Jerusalem began to be uneasy at this excitement of the populace. The signs of the times, too, were ominous; Tiberius, at the age of seventy-four, was rapidly hastening his death by scenes of debauchery at Capri; Pontius Pilate was persecuting the Jews with redoubled fury; whilst, in Egypt, the priests had given forth that the Phœnix was about to spring again to birth from her ashes.[1]

Jesus, who felt the prophetic calling even more emphatic within his soul, though as yet he was

[1] Tacitus, *Annals*, vi. 28, 31.

still feeling his way, came also to the desert of the Jordan, accompanied by a few Essenes, who already acknowledged him as master. He wished to see the Baptist, to listen to his message, and be baptized in public. His desire was to present himself in an humble and respectful attitude towards the prophet who had the courage to denounce the present rulers, and arouse from slumber the soul of Israel.

He saw the rough ascetic, hairy and bearded, with his prophetic lionlike head, standing in a wooden pulpit under a rustic tent covered with branches and goat-skins. All around among the scanty desert shrubs was a mighty crowd, an entire camp: publicans, soldiers of Herod, Samaritans, Levites from Jerusalem; Idumeans with their flocks of sheep, even Arabs with their camels, tents and caravans, arrested by "the voice crying in the wilderness," and this voice of thunder passed over these multitudes. It said: "Repent ye; prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." He called the Pharisees and Scribes "a race of vipers." He added that "the axe was already laid unto the root of the trees," and said of the Messiah: "I baptize you with water only, but He shall baptize you with fire." Then, about sunset, Jesus saw the crowds press towards a cove on the water's

bank, and Herod's mercenaries bend their rough backs beneath the water poured over them by the Baptist. He drew nearer; John did not know Jesus, knew nothing whatever concerning him, but he recognised the Essene by his linen garment. He saw him, a mere unit in the crowd, enter the water up to the girdle, and humbly bend to receive the baptismal sprinkling. When the neophyte arose, the savage preacher's fiery eyes met the Galilean's calm, gentle gaze. A quiver ran through the man of the wilderness as he saw the look of wondrous sweetness beaming from the eyes of Jesus, and involuntarily the question escaped his lips: "Art thou the Messiah?"[1]

The mysterious Essene made no reply, but with bowed head and crossed hands, he waited the blessing. John knew that silence was the law of the Essene novices. After solemnly extending both hands, the Nazarene disappeared with his companions among the water reeds.

[1] According to the Gospels, John immediately recognised Jesus as the Messiah, and baptized him as such. There are contradictory accounts on this point, for, at a later time, when a prisoner of Antipas at Makerous asks the question of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" this tardy doubt proves that though he might have suspected Jesus to be the Messiah, he was not convinced of it. The first compilers of the Gospels, however, being Jews, wished to present Jesus as having received his mission and consecration from John the Baptist, a popular prophet of Judæa.

The Baptist saw him depart with mingled feelings of doubt, secret joy, and profound sadness. What was his own knowledge, his own prophetic hope compared with the light he had seen in the eyes of the unknown, a light which seemed to illuminate his whole being? Ah! if the handsome young Galilean were the Messiah, then indeed had the brightest day of his life dawned! But his own part would now be over, his own voice silent. From this day forward he preached in deeper and more emotional tones on the melancholy theme: "He must increase and I must decrease." He was beginning to feel the gloom and weariness of an old lion tired of roaring, and now silently awaiting the end.

Could it be that he was the Messiah? The Baptist's question also found an echo in the soul of Jesus. Ever since his consciousness had sprung to life, he had found God within himself, and the certainty of the kingdom of Heaven in the radiant beauty of his visions. Then came the suffering of humanity which had filled his heart with the awful outpour of its anguish. The wise Essenes had taught him the secret of religions and of mysteries, they had shown him the spiritual decadence of humanity, and its expectation of a saviour. But how could he find the strength

needed to rescue it from the pit? And now, the direct call of John the Baptist fell on the silence of his meditations like a thunderbolt from Sinai. Could he be the Messiah?

Jesus could answer this question only by inmost meditation. Hence this retreat, this forty days' fast, narrated by Matthew in the form of a symbolic legend. The Temptation in reality represents in the life of Jesus this great crisis, this sovereign vision of truth, which all prophets, all religious initiates, must infallibly experience before beginning their work.

Over above Engaddi, where the Essenes cultivated sesame and the vine, a steep footpath led to a cave or grotto opening out on to the mountain-side. It was entered by way of Dorian columns cut out in the rough rock, similar to those of the "Apostles" retreat in the valley of Jehoshaphat. There one remained suspended above the yawning precipice as though from an eagle's nest. Below, in a gorge, could be seen vineyards and human dwellings away in the distance, the Dead Sea motionless and grey, and the lonely mountains of Moab. The Essenes had appointed this retreat for such among them as wished to submit to the test of solitude. In this spot were several rolls of the prophets, strengthening spices, dry figs, and a small

stream of trickling water, sole nourishment of the ascetic in meditation. It was to this cave that Jesus retired. First of all, he mentally reviewed the whole of humanity's past life, and estimated the gravity of the present times. Rome was in sovereign power, and with her what the Persian magi had called the reign of Ahrimanes, and the prophets the reign of Satan, the sign of the Beast, the apotheosis of Evil. Darkness covered humanity, the soul of earth.

The people of Israel had received from Moses the royal and sacerdotal mission of representing the male religion of the Father of the pure Spirit, of teaching it to other nations, and effecting its triumph. Had its kings and prophets fulfilled this mission? The prophets who alone had been conscious of it, replied unanimously: No! Israel was in her last throes, crushed beneath the might of Rome. Ought a rising of the people to be hazarded once more as the Pharisees still expected; a restoration by force of the temporal royalty of Israel? Should he declare himself son of David, and exclaim with Isaiah: "In my wrath I will trample upon the people . . . and overthrow their might"? Should he be a second Maccabæus, and allow himself to be nominated pontifex-king? Jesus might have made the attempt. He had seen the crowds ready

to rise at the voice of John the Baptist, and the strength he was himself conscious of was far greater than that of the prophet of the wilderness! But then, would violence overcome violence? Would the sword put an end to government by the sword? Would there not be thus supplied fresh recruits to the powers of darkness who were watching their prey in secret?

Ought he not rather to place within the reach of all mankind this truth, which hitherto had remained the privilege of a few sanctuaries and initiates, to open every heart to receive it, until the time should be ripe for it to penetrate the mind by inner revelation and science, *i.e.* to preach the kingdom of Heaven to the poor and lowly, substitute the reign of Grace for that of the Law, transform humanity from its very base by regeneration of souls?

But to whom would victory belong, to Satan or to God? To the spirit of evil who reigns with the formidable powers of earth, or to the divine spirit who is enthroned above the invisible regions of heaven, and sleeps in the heart of man just as the spark lies hidden in the flint? What would be the fate of the prophet who should dare to tear away the veil from the temple and lay bare the emptiness of the sanctuary, braving at once Herod and Cæsar?

And yet it must be done! The inner voice did not say to him as it did to Isaiah: "Take a large volume and write therein with a man's pen!" The voice of God cried out to him, "Rise and speak!" The word of life must be found, the faith which removes mountains, the strength which shatters the bulwarks of evil.

Jesus began fervently to pray. Then a feeling of uneasiness, an increasing trouble came over his soul. He had a feeling that he was losing the marvellous felicity he had participated in, and that he was sinking into a very pit of darkness. A black, dense mist came over him, peopled with phantoms of every kind. He recognised his brothers, his Essene masters, his mother. One after the other they said to him: "It is madness for you to wish for what can never be! You know not what is before you! Renounce it all!" The invincible inner voice replied: "I must go on!" Thus he struggled for a series of days and nights, at times standing, then again on his knees or prostrate on the ground. The abyss in which he was sinking became deeper and deeper, and thicker and thicker the enveloping mist. He felt as though he were approaching something inexpressibly terrible.

Finally, he entered that state of lucid ecstasy in which the very depth of consciousness awakens,

enters into communication with the living Spirit of things, and projects in dreams the images of past and future. His eyes close, and the outer world disappears. The Seer contemplates truth in the light which floods his whole being, and converts his intelligence into a burning furnace.

Then came the clash of thunder, the mountain shook to its foundations. A whirlwind coming from distant space carried off the Seer to the top of the temple at Jerusalem. Down below shone roofs and minarets like a forest of gold and silver. Hymns were ascending from the Holy of Holies, waves of incense arose from every altar and formed in eddying circles beneath his feet. People in festive garb filled the porticoes, whilst women joyfully sang into the air their hymns of ardent devotion. Trumpets sounded, and a mighty chorus of voices exclaimed: "Glory to the Messiah! the King of Israel!" "Thou shalt be this King if thou wilt worship me," said a voice from below. "Who art thou?" asked Jesus.

Again the wind carried him through space to the summit of a mountain. At his feet lay, in their golden glory, all the kingdoms of the earth.

"I am the king of spirits and the prince of the earth," answered the voice from below. . . . "I know who thou art," said Jesus; "thy forms are innumer-

able, thy name is Satan. Appear in thy earthly form." . . . The figure of a crowned monarch appeared, enthroned in the clouds. Around his imperial head shone a faint, pale halo. The sombre figure stood out against a blood-red nimbus, with its pallid, ghastly countenance, and eyes flashing forth a cold steely light. He said: "I am Cæsar. Only bow down before me, and I will give thee all these kingdoms." Jesus said to him: "Get thee behind me, tempter! It is written: 'Thou shalt worship only the Lord thy God.'" Immediately the vision faded away.

Finding himself alone in the cave of Engaddi, Jesus said: "By what sign shall I overcome the powers of the earth?" . . . "By the sign of the Son of Man," said a voice from above. "Show me this sign," said Jesus.

Away on the horizon appeared a shining constellation, four stars in the sign of a cross. The Galilean recognised the sign of ancient initiations familiar to Egypt and preserved by the Essenes. When the world was young, the sons of Japhet had worshipped it as the sign of earthly and heavenly fire, the sign of Life with all its joys, of Love with all its wonders. Later the Egyptian initiates had seen in it the symbol of the great mystery, Trinity dominated by Unity, the image of

the sacrifice of the ineffable Being who breaks himself in order to manifest himself in the universe. Symbol at once of life, death, and resurrection, it covered innumerable hypogea, temples and tombs. . . . The brilliant cross grew larger and came nearer, as though attracted by the heart of the Seer. The four living stars shone forth like suns of light and glory. "Behold the magic sign of Life and Immortality!" said the heavenly voice. "In ancient times it was in the possession of men, now it is lost. Wilt thou restore it to them?" . . . "I will," said Jesus. . . . "Then look, behold thy destiny!"

Suddenly the four stars disappeared. It was night; loud thunderclaps shook the mountains to their foundations; whilst from the depths of the Dead Sea emerged a dark, sombre mountain, surmounted with a black cross. On it was nailed a man in the agony of death. The mountain was covered with a demon-stricken mob, crying out in hellish jeers: "If thou art the Messiah, save thyself!" The Seer opened wide his eyes, then fell back, cold drops of perspiration streaming down his face, for this crucified man was himself. . . . He had understood. In order to overcome, he must identify himself with this terror-stricken image, summoned up by himself, and placed there before him like an evil-boding omen. Wavering in his uncertainty as

to the emptiness of infinite space, Jesus felt at once the tortures of the crucified one, the insults of men, and the profound silence of heaven. . . . "Thou canst take it or reject it," said the angelic voice. The vision of the cross-phantom and the crucified victim began to grow dim, when of a sudden Jesus saw once more by his side the sick wretches of the pool of Siloam, and behind them myriads of despairing souls murmuring, with clasped hands: "Without thee we are lost; save us, thou who knowest how to love!" Then the Galilean slowly arose, and with outstretched arms, in an attitude of supreme love, exclaimed: "Mine be the cross! Let but the world be saved!" Immediately Jesus felt a mighty rending asunder throughout his frame, and a terrible groan escaped his lips. . . . At the same time the dark, sombre mountain and the cross faded away, a gentle radiant beam of divine felicity entered the soul of the Seer, and from the heights of heaven a voice descended, saying, "Satan is no longer master! Death is overthrown! Glory to the Son of Man! Glory to the Son of God!"

When Jesus awoke from this vision nothing around him had changed; the rising sun cast his golden beams on the side of the cave of Engaddi; soothing dewdrops—veritable tears of angelic love—bathed his bruised feet, and light clouds of mist

were rising from the Red Sea. But he was no longer the same. A definite event had taken place in the fathomless depths of his consciousness, he had solved the problem of life and had won peace, the great certainty had entered his soul. From the rejection of his earthly being, which he had trodden under foot and cast into the pit, a new consciousness had arisen in radiant majesty. . . . He knew he had become the Messiah by an irrevocable act of his will.

Soon after, he once more descended to the village of the Essenes, where he learned that John the Baptist had just been seized by Antipas and imprisoned in the fortress of Makerous. Far from showing fear at this omen, he saw therein a sign that the time was ripe and that he in his turn must act. Accordingly, he gave out to the Essenes that he was about to preach in Galilee, "the Gospel of the kingdom of Heaven." That meant, to bring the great mysteries within reach of the poor and lowly, to translate for them the doctrine of the initiates. Like boldness had never been seen since the days when Çakia Mouni, the last Buddha, moved by mighty compassion, had preached on the banks of the Ganges. The same sublime compassion for humanity animated Jesus. To it he joined inner illumination, capacity for loving, a

grandeur of faith and energy of action belonging to himself alone. From the abyss of death which he had fathomed, and whose bitterness he had tasted beforehand, he brought both hope and life for all his brethren.

CHAPTER IV

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS—POPULAR AND ESOTERIC INSTRUCTION—MIRACLES—APOSTLES —WOMEN

HITHERTO I have endeavoured to illuminate with its own light that portion of the life of Jesus which the Gospels have left in comparative obscurity, or wrapped around with the veil of legend. I have related by what kind of initiation and development of soul and thought the great Nazarene attained to the Messianic consciousness. In a word, I have endeavoured to reconstruct the inner genesis of the Christ. The rest of my task will be all the easier if this genesis be once acknowledged. The public life of Jesus has been related in the Gospels. These narratives contain divergences and contradictions as well as additions. The legend which overlies or exaggerates certain mysteries may still be traced here and there, but from the whole there is set free such a unity of thought and action, so powerful and original a character, that we invincibly feel ourselves in the presence of reality and of life. These

inimitable stories cannot be reconstructed; their childlike simplicity and symbolical beauty tell us more than any amplifications can do. But what is needed nowadays is the illumination of the rôle of Jesus by esoteric traditions and truths, showing the signification and bearing of his double teaching.

What were these good tidings of which he was the bearer, this already famous Essene who had now returned from the shores of the Dead Sea to his native Galilee to preach there the Gospel of the Kingdom? How was he to change the face of the world? The thoughts of the prophets had just found their realisation in him. Strong in the entire gift of his very being, he now came to share with men this kingdom of heaven which he had won in meditation and strife, in torments of pain and boundless joy. He came to rend asunder the veil which the ancient religion of Moses had cast over the future beyond the tomb. He came to say: "Believe, love, act, and let hope be the soul of your deeds. Beyond this earth there is a world of souls, a more perfect life. This I know, for I come therefrom; thither will I lead you. But mere aspiration for that world will not suffice. To attain it you must begin by realising it here below, first in yourselves, afterwards in humanity. By what means? By Love and active Charity."

So the young prophet came to Galilee. He did not say he was the Messiah, but discussed in the synagogues concerning the laws and the prophets. He preached on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, in fishermen's boats, by the fountains, in the oases of verdure abounding between Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Korazin. He healed the sick by laying-on of hands, a mere look or command, often by his presence alone. Multitudes followed him, and already numerous disciples attached themselves to him. These he recruited from among the fishermen, tax-collectors, in a word, from the common people. Those of upright, unsullied nature, possessed of an ardent faith, were the ones he wanted, and these he irresistibly attracted to himself. He was guided in his choice by that gift of second sight, which has ever been the peculiarity of men of action, but especially of religious initiators. A single look enabled him to fathom the depths of a soul. He needed no other test, and when he said: "Follow me!" he was obeyed. A single gesture summoned to his side the timid and hesitating, to whom he said: "Come unto me, ye that are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my

burden is light."[1] He divined the innate thoughts of men, who in trouble and confusion recognised the Master. At times, he recognised in unbelief uprightness of heart. When Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus replied: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"[2] From his adepts he required neither oaths nor profession of faith; simply love and belief in himself. He put into practice the common possession of goods as a principle of fraternity among his own people.

Jesus thus began to realise, within his small group of followers, the Kingdom of Heaven he wished to establish on earth. The Sermon on the Mount offers us an image of this kingdom already formed in germ, along with a *résumé* of the popular teaching of Jesus. He is seated on the top of a hill; the future initiates are grouped at his feet; farther down the slope the eager crowd drinks in the words which fall from his mouth. What is the doctrine of the new teacher? Fasting or maceration or public penance? No; he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Then he unrolls in ascending order the four final beatitudes, the

[1] Matthew xi. 28. [2] John i. 47.

marvellous power of humility, of sorrow for others, of the inner goodness of the heart and of hunger and thirst after righteousness. . . . Then, in glowing colours he depicts the active and triumphant virtues, compassion, purity of heart, militant kindness, and finally martyrdom for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Like the sound of a golden bell, this promise gives his listeners a faint glimpse of the starry heavens above the Master's head. Then they see the humble virtues, no longer in the guise of poor emaciated women in grey penitents' robes, but transformed into beatitudes, into virgins of light whose brightness effaces the splendour of the lilies and the glory of Solomon. With the gentle breath of their palm leaves they scatter over these thirsting souls the fragrant perfumes of the heavenly kingdom.

The wonder is that this kingdom expands, not in the distant heavens, but in the hearts of the listeners. They exchange looks of astonishment with one another; these poor in spirit have, of a sudden, become so rich. Mightier than Moses, the soul's magician has struck their hearts, from which rushes up an immortal spring of life. His teaching to the people may be summed up in the sentence: The kingdom of heaven is within you!

Now that he lays before them the means necessary to attain to this unheard-of happiness, they are no longer astonished at the extraordinary things he asks of them: to kill even the desire for evil, to forgive offences, to love their enemies. So powerful is the stream of love with which his heart overflows, that he carries them away along the current. In his presence they find everything easy. Mighty the novelty, singular the boldness of such teaching. The Galilean prophet sets the inner life of the soul above all outer practices, the invisible above the visible, the Kingdom of Heaven above the benefits of earth. He commands that the choice be made between God and man. Then, summing up his doctrine, he says, "Love your neighbour as yourself! . . . Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect!" Thus, in popular form, he afforded a glimpse of the whole profundity of science and morals. For the supreme commandment of the initiation is to reproduce divine perfection in the perfecting of the soul, and the secret of science lies in the chain of analogy and correspondences, uniting in ever-enlarging circles the particular to the universal, the finite to the infinite.

If such was the public and purely moral teaching of Jesus, it is evident that in addition he gave

private instruction to his disciples, parallel with and explanatory of the former, showing its inner meaning and penetrating to the very depths of the spiritual truth he derived from the esoteric traditions of the Essenes and from his own experience. As this tradition was violently crushed by the Church from the second century onwards, the majority of theologians no longer knew the real bearing of the Christ's words, with their sometimes double and triple meanings, and saw none but the primary and literal signification. For those who deeply studied the doctrine of the mysteries in India, Egypt, and Greece, the esoteric thought of the Christ animated not merely his slightest word, but every act of his life. Dimly perceptible in the three Synoptics, it springs into complete evidence in the Gospel of John. Here may be stated an instance touching an essential point of the doctrine :—

Jesus happens to be passing by Jerusalem. He is not yet preaching in the temple, though he heals the sick and gives instruction to his friends. The work of love must prepare the ground into which the fruitful seed shall fall. Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, had heard of the new prophet. Filled with curiosity, though unwilling to compromise himself in the eyes of his sect, he re-

quests with the Galilean a secret interview, which is granted. The Pharisee calls at his dwelling by night and says to him: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus replied: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus asks if it is possible for a man to enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. Jesus answered: "Verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[1]

Under this evidently symbolical form, Jesus sums up the ancient doctrine of regeneration already known in the mysteries of Egypt. To be born again of water and of the Spirit, to be baptized by water and by fire, mark two degrees of initiation, two stages of the inner and spiritual development of man. Water here represents truth perceived intellectually, *i.e.* in an abstract and general manner. It purifies the soul and develops its spiritual germ.

A new birth by the Spirit, or baptism by (heavenly) fire, signifies the assimilation of the truth by the will in such a way that it may become the blood and life, the very soul of every action. From this

[1] John iii. 5.

results the complete victory of spirit over matter, the absolute mastery of the spiritualised soul over the body transformed into a docile instrument; a mastery which awakens its dormant faculties, opens its inner sense, and gives it an intuitive insight into truth, and a direct action of soul on soul. This state is equivalent to the heavenly one which Jesus Christ called the kingdom of God. Baptism by water, or intellectual initiation, is accordingly the first step in rebirth; baptism by the spirit is total rebirth, a transformation of the soul by the fire of intelligence and will, and consequently, to a certain extent, of the elements of the body—in a word, a radical regeneration. From this come the exceptional powers it gives to man.

This is the earthly signification of the eminently theosophical conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. There is also a special signification which might briefly be called the esoteric doctrine concerning the constitution of man. According to this doctrine, man is threefold: body, soul, and spirit. He has an immortal and indivisible part, the spirit; a perishable and divisible part, the body. The soul which unites the two shares in the nature of both. Living organism as it is, it possesses an ethereal and fluidic body, similar to the material body, which, but for this invisible double, would

have neither life, movement, nor unity. According as man obeys the suggestions of the spirit or the impulses of the body, according as he attaches himself to the one or the other, the fluidic body becomes etherealised or dulled ; unifies or becomes disaggregated. Accordingly, it happens that, after physical death, the majority of men have to submit to a second death of the soul, which consists in their being cleansed from the impure elements of the astral body, sometimes even in undergoing slow decomposition ; whilst the completely regenerated man, having formed on this earth his spiritual body, possesses his heaven in himself and enters the region to which his affinity attracts him. . . . Now water, in ancient esoterism, symbolises fluidic matter which is infinitely transformable, as fire symbolises the one spirit. In speaking of rebirth by water and spirit, the Christ makes allusion to that double transformation of his spiritual body and his fluidic envelope, which awaits man after death, and without which he cannot enter the kingdom of lofty souls and purified spirits. For " that which is born of the flesh is flesh (*i.e.* chained down and perishable), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (*i.e.* free and immortal). Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."[1]

Thus spoke Jesus to Nicodemus in the silence of the night at Jerusalem. A small lamp, placed between the two, dimly lights their vague, uncertain forms. But the eyes of the Galilean Master shine with mysterious brilliancy through the darkness. How could one help believing in the soul, when looking into those eyes, now gently beaming, now flashing forth the glory of heaven? The learned Pharisee has seen his knowledge of Scripture texts crumble away, but then he obtains a glimpse of a new world. He has seen a divine light in the face of the prophet, whose long auburn hair is falling over his shoulders. He has felt the powerful warmth emanating from his being draw him to the Master. He has seen small white flames like a magnetic halo appear and disappear around his brow and temples. And then he imagined he felt the breath of the Spirit pass over his heart. Moved to his inmost soul, Nicodemus returned secretly in the silence of the night to his home. He will continue to live among the Pharisees, but in the secrecy of his heart he will remain faithful to Jesus.

Let us note one more important point in this

[1] John iii. 6–8.

teaching. According to the materialistic doctrine, the soul is an ephemeral and accidental resultant of the forces of the body ; in the ordinary spiritualist doctrine it is something abstract, without any conceivable bond with the body ; in the esoteric doctrine—the only rational one—the physical body is a product of the incessant work of the soul, which acts upon it by the similar organism of the astral body, just as the visible universe is only the dynamics of the infinite Spirit. This is the reason Jesus gives this doctrine to Nicodemus as explanation of the miracles he works. It may indeed serve as a key to the occult healing art, practised by him and by a small number of adepts and saints before as well as after Christ. Ordinary medicine combats the evils of the body by acting on the latter. The adept or saint being a centre of spiritual and fluidic force, acts directly on the soul of the patient, and by his astral on his physical body. It is the same in all magnetic cures ; Jesus operates by means of forces existing in all men, but he operates in large doses by powerful and concentrated projections. He gives the Scribes and Pharisees his power of healing bodies as a proof of his power to pardon and heal the soul, his higher object. The physical cure thus becomes the counter proof of a moral cure, which permits of his saying to the man made

whole, "Rise and walk!" The science of to-day tries to explain the phenomenon which the ancients and middle ages called "possession" as a simple nervous disorder. The explanation is insufficient. Psychologists who attempt to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of the soul see therein a duplication of consciousness, an irruption of its latent part. This question touches that of the different planes of the human consciousness, which acts now on the one now on the other, the changing play being studied in different somnambulistic conditions. It also touches the sensitive world. In any case, it is certain Jesus had the faculty of restoring equilibrium in troubled bodies, and restoring souls to their purest consciousness. "Veritable magic," said Plotinus, "is love, with hate its contrary. It is by love and hate that magicians act, through their philters and enchantments." Love in its highest consciousness and supreme power constituted the magic of the Christ.

Numerous disciples took part in his inner teaching. Still, in order to give lasting power to the new religion, there was needed an active group of chosen ones who should become the pillars of the spiritual temple he wished to erect over against the other: hence the institution of the apostles. These

he did not choose from among the Essenes, as he needed men whose natures were vigorous and fresh to implant his religion in the very heart of the people. Two groups of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, the sons of Jonas, on the one hand, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, on the other, all four fisherman by occupation and belonging to respectable families, formed the first apostles. At the beginning of his career Jesus appears to them at Capernaum, by the lake of Gennesareth, where they were engaged in their daily occupation. He takes up his abode with them and converts the whole family. Peter and John stand out as prominent figures among the twelve. . . . Peter straightforward and narrow-minded, easily influenced by either hope or discouragement, but at the same time a man of action, capable, by reason of his energetic character and absolute faith, of leading the others. . . . John, of a deep hidden nature, enthusiastic to such a degree that Jesus called him "the son of thunder," his ardent soul always concentrated on itself, by disposition melancholy, and given to reverie, though subject to formidable outbursts and apocalyptic visions. His tenderness of soul, spite of all this, was such as the rest never suspected and only the Master knew. John alone, silent and contemplative, will understand the in-

most thought of the Christ. He will be the Evangelist of love and divine intelligence, the esoteric apostle *par excellence.*

Persuaded by his words, convinced by his acts, dominated by his mighty intelligence, and encircled in his magnetic radiance, the apostles followed the Master from town to town. Preaching to the populace alternated with secret instruction as he gradually opened out to them his thoughts. All the same, he still maintained profound silence concerning himself, his own future. He had told them that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that the Messiah would soon come. The apostles were already whispering to one another, "It is he!" and repeating it to others. But Jesus, with gentle dignity, simply called himself "The Son of Man," an expression the esoteric signification of which they did not yet understand, though, in his mouth, it seemed to mean "Messenger of suffering humanity." For he added, "The foxes have their holes, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." It was only in accordance with the popular Jewish idea that the apostles had hitherto considered the Messiah, their simple hopes conceived of the kingdom of heaven as being a political government, of which Jesus would be the crowned king

and they the ministers. To combat this idea and radically transform it, revealing to the apostles the true Messiah, the spiritual royalty; to communicate to them this sublime truth he called the Father, this supreme force he called the Spirit, mysteriously uniting all souls with the invisible; to show them by his word, life, and death, a true Son of God; to leave them the conviction that they and all men were his brothers and could rejoin him if they wished; and finally to leave them, only after opening to their longing eyes the whole immensity of heaven—this was the mighty work Jesus had begun upon his apostles. "Will they believe or not?" is the question of the drama being played between them and himself. Another question far more poignant and terrible is being asked in the depths of his own consciousness. To this we shall soon give our attention.

For at this hour a wave of joy overwhelmed the tragic thought in the consciousness of the Christ. The tempest has not yet burst over the lake of Tiberias. It is the Galilean springtime of the Gospel, the dawn of the kingdom of God, the mystic union of the initiate with his spiritual family, which follows and travels with him as the procession of handmaidens follows the bridegroom

in the parable. The believing crowd hurries along in the footsteps of the beloved Master on the banks of the azure lake enclosed in the glorious hills as in a golden bowl. They go from the fragrant banks of Capernaum to Bethsaida's orange groves and the mountainous Chorazim, where the lake of Gennesareth is bordered by shady palms. In this procession the women have a place apart. The Master is everywhere surrounded by the mothers or sisters of his disciples, by timid virgins, or repentant Magdalenes. Attentive and faithful, impelled by passionate love, they scatter along his path eternal blossoms of sadness and hope. They at any rate need no proof that he is the Messiah: a single look into his face is sufficient for them. The wonderful felicity emanating from his aura, added to the note of divine unexpressed suffering they instinctively feel, persuades them that he is the Son of God. Jesus had early stifled in himself the cry of the flesh, during his stay among the Essenes he had tamed the might of the senses. This had given him an empire over souls and the divine power of pardon, a true angelic bliss. He says to the sinning woman now, with dishevelled hair, kneeling at the Master's feet, over which she pours the precious ointment: "Much shall be forgiven her, for she

has loved much!" Sublime thought, containing an entire redemption, for pardon sets free.

The Christ is the liberator and restorer of women, in spite of St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church who, by lowering woman to the rôle of man's servant, have wrongly interpreted the Master's thought. She had been glorified in Vedic times; Buddha had mistrusted her; the Christ has raised her by restoring her mission of love and divination. The initiate Woman represents the soul of Humanity; Aisha, as Moses had named it, *i.e.* the power of Intuition; the loving and seeing Faculty. The impetuous Mary Magdalene, out of whom, according to the biblical expression, Jesus had driven seven devils, became the most ardent of his disciples. She it was who first, St. John tells us, saw the divine Master, the spiritual Christ risen from the tomb. Legend has been obstinately bent on seeing in the passionate believing woman the greatest worshipper of Jesus, the heart-initiate, and legend has not been mistaken, for her history represents the whole regeneration of woman as desired by the Christ.

It was in the farm of Bethany, near Martha, Mary and Mary Magdalene, that Jesus loved to rest from the labours of his mission, and prepare himself for supreme tests. There he lavished his tenderest

words of comfort, and in sweet discourse spoke of the divine mysteries he dared not yet confide to his disciples. At times, as the sun was setting in the golden horizon of the west, half-hidden in the branches of the olive-groves, Jesus would become pensive, and a veil would overshadow his illumined countenance. He thought of the difficulties of his work, of the uncertain faith of the apostles, of the hostile powers of the world. The temple, Jerusalem, humanity itself, with its crime and ingratitude, seemed to overwhelm him beneath a living mountain.

Would his arms upraised to heaven be strong enough to grind this mountain to powder, or would he himself be crushed beneath its mighty bulk? Then he spoke vaguely of a terrible trial which awaited him, and also of his coming end. Awed by his solemn tones, the women dared not question him. However unchangeable the Master's serenity of soul might be, they understood that it was as though wrapped about with the shroud of an indescribable sadness, separating him from the joys of earth. They had a presentiment of the prophet's destiny, they felt his invincible power of resolution. What was the meaning of those gloomy clouds which arose from the direction of Jerusalem? Wherefore this

burning wind of fever and death, passing over their hearts as over the blighted hills of Judæa, with their violet cadaverous hues ? One evening—a star of mystery—a tear shone in Jesus' eyes. A shudder passed through the frames of the women, their tears also flowed in silence. They were lamenting over him ; he was lamenting over all mankind !

CHAPTER V

STRUGGLE WITH THE PHARISEES—FLIGHT TO CÆSAREA—THE TRANSFIGURATION

THIS Galilean springtime, during which the dawn of the Kingdom of Heaven seemed to rise upon the attentive multitudes, lasted two years. Now, however, the sky darkened, sinister flashes appeared, forerunners of catastrophe. The storm burst upon the small family at Galilee like one of those tempests which sweep the lake of Gennesareth, and in their wild fury engulf the fishermen's frail barques. Jesus was in no way surprised at the consternation and terror of his disciples, he fully expected it. It was impossible that his preaching and increasing popularity should not stir the religious authorities of the Jews, and just as impossible that the struggle should not be a complete one between these authorities and himself. On the contrary, from this conflict alone could light flash forth.

At the time of Jesus the Pharisees formed a compact body of six thousand men. Their name Perishin means "separate" or "distinguished."

Of a lofty and often heroic though narrow and haughty patriotism, they represented the party of national restoration; their existence only dated from the Maccabees. They acknowledged both an oral and a written tradition. They believed in angels, a future life and resurrection, but the glimpses of esoterism which came to them from Persia they buried beneath the darkness of a gross material interpretation. Strict observers of the law, though quite opposed to the spirit of the prophets who placed religion in the love of God and of men, they made piety consist of rites and ceremonies, fasts and public penance. On great occasions they were to be seen in the open streets, their faces covered with soot, praying aloud with contrite mien, and ostentatiously distributing alms. In contradistinction to all this they lived in luxury, eagerly intriguing after authority and power. None the less were they the chiefs of the democratic party, holding the people under their control.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, represented the sacerdotal and aristocratic party. They were composed of families whose pretension it was to have exercised priesthood by hereditary right ever since the time of David. Extreme in their conservatism they rejected oral tradition, accepted nothing but the letter of the law, and denied the existence

of the soul and a future life. They ridiculed alike the stormy practices of the Pharisees and their extravagant beliefs. For them, religion consisted entirely in sacerdotal ceremonies. Under the Seleucides they had deprived the pontificate of power, as they were in complete accord with the pagans, and were even imbued with Greek sophistry and refined Epicurism. Under the Maccabees the Pharisees had been ejected from the pontificate, though, under Herod and the Romans, they had apparently regained this position. The Sadducees were stern and hard-hearted as men, and lovers of good cheer as priests, possessed of one faith, that of their own superiority, and of one idea, the determination to maintain the power tradition had handed down to them.

In such a religion what could Jesus find, Jesus the initiate, inheritor of the prophets, the Seer of Engaddi, seeking in social order the image of the divine, in which justice reigns over life, science over justice, and love and wisdom over all three? . . . In the temple, instead of supreme science and initiation, he found materialistic and agnostic ignorance, playing on religion as on a power-giving instrument, in other words, priestly imposture. . . . In schools and synagogues, instead of the bread of life, and the dew from heaven falling upon men's

hearts, he saw an interested morality under the veneer of formal worship, *i.e.* hypocrisy. . . . Far above, enthroned in a nimbus of glory, sat almighty Cæsar, the apotheosis of evil and the deification of matter, the sole god of the then world, only possible master of the Sadducees and Pharisees, whether they wished it so or not. In adopting the idea from Persian esoterism as did the prophets, was Jesus wrong in naming this reign the dominion of Satan or Ahrimanes, *i.e.* the rule of matter over spirit, in place of which he wished to substitute that of spirit over matter? Like all great reformers, he attacked not men, who as exceptions, might be excellent, but doctrines and institutions which mould the majority of mankind. The challenge must be delivered, and war declared against the existing powers.

The struggle began in the synagogues of Galilee and continued beneath the porticoes of the temple at Jerusalem, to which Jesus made lengthened visits, preaching and replying to his opponents. In this as throughout his whole career, he acted with that mixture of prudence and boldness, meditative reserve and impetuous action, which characterised his wonderfully well-balanced nature. He did not take the offensive against his opponents, but waited and replied to their attack, which never tarried,

for, from the very beginning of his ministry, the Pharisees had been jealous of him by reason of his popularity and his healing of the sick. They quickly suspected him to be their most dangerous enemy. Accosting him with that mocking urbanity, that cunning malevolence, veiled beneath a mask of hypocritical gentleness, in which they were past-masters, in their rôle as learned doctors and men of importance and authority, they asked what reasons he had for having dealings with publicans and sinners? Why did his disciples dare to pluck ears of corn on the Sabbath day? Such conduct constituted a grave violation of their regulations. With magnanimous gentleness, Jesus replied in words at once tender and courteous. He tried on them his gospel of love, spoke of the love of God, who rejoices more over one repentant sinner than over many just persons. He related to them the parables of the lost sheep and of the prodigal son. In embarrassed astonishment they held their peace. Uniting again, they returned to the charge, reproaching him for healing the sick on the Sabbath day. "Hypocrites!" replied Jesus, a flash of indignation illumining his eyes, "do not you on the Sabbath day remove the chain from your own oxen's neck and lead them away to the watering-trough? May not therefore the daughter of Abra-

ham be delivered this same day from the chains of Satan?" No longer knowing what to reply, the Pharisees accused him of casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub. With quite as much wit as logical acumen, Jesus replied that the devil does not cast himself out, adding that sin against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but not sin against the Holy Ghost, signifying thereby that he attached slight importance to insults against himself personally, but that a denial of the Good and the True, when once established, constitutes intellectual perversity, the supreme vice and an irremediable evil. This was a declaration of war. He was called Blasphemer! Agent of Beelzebub! which accusations he answered by the expressions: Hypocrites! Generation of vipers! From this time the struggle continually increased in bitterness. Jesus gave evidence of a close incisive logic, his words lashed like whips and pierced like arrows. He had changed tactics; instead of defending himself, he attacked and replied to charges by other charges more vigorous still, showing no pity for hypocrisy, the one vice at the root of all others. "Why transgress ye the law of God by reason of your traditions? God commanded, Honour thy father and thy mother; you dispense with honouring parents, if, as alternative, money flows into the temple.

With your lips you serve Isaiah, but your devotion is devoid of heart."

Jesus ever kept perfect control over himself, though the enthusiasm and greatness of the struggle daily increased. The more he was attacked, the more emphatically did he proclaim himself as the Messiah. He began to utter threats against the temple, to foretell the misfortunes that Israel would undergo, to appeal to the heathen, and to say that the Lord would send other labourers into his vineyard. Thereupon the Pharisees of Jerusalem became anxious. Seeing they could neither impose silence on him nor find any effective retort, they too changed tactics. Their idea now was to ensnare him, so they sent deputations whose object it was to induce him to utter heretical sayings which would warrant the Sanhedrim in laying hands on him as a blasphemer, in the name of the law of Moses, or the Roman governor in condemning him as a rebel. Hence the insidious question concerning the woman taken in adultery, and the coin stamped with Cæsar's image. Ever penetrating the designs of his enemies, Jesus, with profound psychology and skilful strategy, disarmed them by his replies. Finding it impossible to effect their object by these means, the Pharisees attempted to intimidate him by annoying him at

every turn. Worked upon and excited by them, the majority of the people began to turn away from Jesus when they saw that he was not restoring the kingdom of Israel. Everywhere, even in the smallest of hamlets, he met suspicious and wily countenances, spies, and treacherous emissaries to track and dishearten him. Some came and said to him, "Depart from here, for Herod (Antipas) is bent on killing thee." He replied proudly, "Go tell that fox; it cannot be that a prophet die out of Jerusalem!" Nevertheless, he was often obliged to cross the sea of Tiberias and take refuge on the eastern bank in order to escape these snares. Nowhere was he now free from danger. Meanwhile John the Baptist was put to death by order of Antipas in the fortress of Makerous. It is said that Hannibal, on seeing the head of his brother Hasdrubal, killed by the Romans, exclaimed: "Now I recognise the fate of Carthage." Jesus could recognise his own fate in the death of his precursor. He had had no doubt of this ever since his vision at Engaddi; had begun his work, knowing the inevitable end, and yet this news, when brought by the sorrow-stricken disciples of the prophet of the wilderness, struck Jesus as a death-warning. He exclaimed: "They did not recognise him, but have done with him as they

wished, thus shall the Son of Man suffer at their hands."

The twelve were troubled and anxious; Jesus was hesitating on his pathway. He did not wish to let himself be taken, but rather, once his work finished, to offer himself of his own free will, and die as a prophet at the hour he himself should choose. Already hunted down during the whole of the past year, accustomed to escape from the enemy by making marches and counter-marches, disheartened with the people, whose apathy, after days of enthusiasm, he was keenly conscious of, Jesus determined once more to escape with his disciples. Reaching the summit of a mountain, he turned round to cast one final lingering look on his beloved lake, on whose banks he had wished the dawn of the Kingdom of Heaven to shine. His eyes wandered over those towns lying by the water-side, or rising tier upon tier along the mountain-side, half buried in their verdant oases, and now glittering with white beneath the golden veil of twilight; those beloved towns in which he had sown the words of life, and which now abandoned him. A presentiment of the future came over him. With prophetic vision he saw this splendid country changed into a wilderness beneath the vengeful hand of Ishmael, and those words, devoid of anger, though full of

sorrow and bitterness, fell from his lips: "Woe unto thee, Capernaum; woe unto thee, Chorazim; woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" Then turning towards the heathen world, accompanied by his disciples, he took the path leading along the Jordan valley from Gadara to Cæsarea Philippi.

Sad and long was the route of the fugitive band across the mighty plain of reeds and the marshes of the upper Jordan under the burning Syrian sun. The nights were passed beneath the tents of shepherds, or with such Essenes as were living in the small hamlets of this abandoned country. The anxious disciples proceeded with downcast eyes; the Master, filled with sorrow, remained plunged in silent meditation. He was reflecting on the impossibility of the triumph of his doctrine by preaching to the people, and on the unremitting plottings of his enemies. The final struggle was becoming imminent, he had reached a terrible difficulty; how was he to escape? On the other hand, his thoughts dwelt with anxiety on his spiritual family now scattered abroad, and especially on the twelve apostles, who, in faith and trust, had left everything—family, profession, and fortune—to follow him, and who, in spite of all, would soon be heart-broken and deceived in their mighty hope of a triumphant Messiah. Could he leave them to

themselves? Had the truth sufficiently penetrated their souls? Would they believe in him, and in his doctrine, at all events? Did they know who he was? Dominated by this thought, he one day asked them: "Whom say men that I, the Son of Man, am?" They replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then Jesus said unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."[1]

In the mouth of Peter, and the thought of Jesus, these words have not the signification the Church at a later date wished to give them: "Thou art the Elect of Israel announced by the prophets." In the Hindoo, the Egyptian, and the Greek initiation, the term "Son of God" signified "a consciousness identified with divine truth, a will capable of manifesting it." According to the prophets, this Messiah must be the greatest of these manifestations. He would be the Son of Man, *i.e.* the Elect of earthly Humanity; the Son of God, *i.e.* the Envoy of heavenly Humanity, and, as such, having in himself the Father or Spirit, who, by Humanity, reigns over the universe.

At this affirmation of the faith of the apostles Jesus

[1] Matt. xvi. 13–16.

felt an immense joy. So his disciples had understood him ; he would live in them, and the bond between heaven and earth would be re-established. Jesus said to Peter, "Happy art thou, Simon son of Jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." By this reply Jesus gives Peter to understand that he considers him as an initiate, as he himself was, and also possessed of a deep insight into truth. This is the true, the only revelation, this is "the stone on which the Christ wishes to build his Church, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." Jesus relies on the Apostle Peter, only in so far as he shall have this intuition. A moment later, on the apostle reverting to the ordinary, fear-stricken Peter, the Master treats him in quite a different fashion. Jesus had announced to his disciples that he was about to be put to death at Jerusalem, and Peter protested with the words, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee!" But Jesus, as though seeing a temptation of the flesh in this impulse of sympathy, attempting to shake his mighty resolution, turned sharply round to the apostle and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. xvi. 21–23). And the Master's im-

perious gesture seemed to say, "Forward through the desert!" Intimidated by his solemn voice and stern look, the apostles bowed their heads in silence, and resumed their journey over the stone hills of the Gaulonitide. This flight, by which Jesus brought his disciples out of Israel, resembled a march towards the problem of his Messianic destiny, the key to which he was seeking.

They reached the gates of Cæsarea. That town, which had become pagan since the time of Antiochus the Great, was sheltered within a verdant oasis near the Jordan's source, at the foot of Hermon's snowy peaks. It had its amphitheatre, and was resplendent with costly palaces and Grecian temples. Jesus crossed it, and continued to the spot at which the Jordan in a clear bubbling stream issues from a mountain cavern, like the stream of life springing from the profound bosom of nature. There was erected a small temple dedicated to Pan; and in the grotto, on the banks of the stream, numerous columns, marble nymphs, and pagan divinities. The Jews held in horror these tokens of idolatrous worship, Jesus contemplated them with an indulgent smile. In them he recognised the imperfect effigies of the divine beauty, whose radiant models he bore within his own soul. He had not come to utter maledictions against paganism, but to transform it; not

to scatter anathema on earth and its mysterious powers, but to point out to it the way to heaven. His heart was large enough, and his doctrine sufficiently vast, to embrace all people, and to say to men of every religion: "Raise your heads, and learn that you all have one same Father." And yet, there he was at the extreme limit of Israel, hunted like a wild beast, stifled between two peoples who rejected him alike. In front, the heathen who did not yet understand him, and on whom his words fell powerless; behind, the Jews, a people which stoned its prophets, and stopped its ears, so as not to hear its Messiah; whilst all the time the Pharisees and Sadducees were watching their prey. What superhuman courage, what unprecedented power of action would be needed to crush all these obstacles, to penetrate beyond heathen idolatry and Jewish harshness right to the heart of that suffering humanity he loved with every fibre of his being, and induce it to listen to his resurrection message! Then suddenly his mind went back to bygone times, descending once again the stream of the Jordan, Israel's sacred river, passing from the temple of Pan to that of Jerusalem, measuring the distance which separated ancient paganism from the universal prophetic thought, and, regaining its source, as an eagle its

nest, returned from the anguish of Cæsarea to the vision of Engaddi! And now, from the depths of the Dead Sea, he sees this terrible phantom of the cross once more spring forth! . . . Had the hour of the great sacrifice at length come? Jesus, like all men, possessed two consciousnesses; the earthly one lulled him with illusions, saying: "Who knows? Perhaps I shall escape this destiny." The other, the divine one, repeated implacably: "The path of victory passes through the gate of anguish." Must he choose this latter voice?

At all important epochs in his life we see Jesus withdraw to the mountain to pray. Had not the Vedic sage said, "Prayer upholds heaven and rules the Gods"? Jesus knew this greatest of all forces. Usually he admitted of no companion in this mountain solitude when he descended into the inmost elements of his being. This time, however, he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, to spend the night on the summit of a lofty mountain. Legend states this to have been Mount Tabor. There, between the Master and three of the greatest initiates among the disciples, the mysterious scene related in the Gospels under the name of the *Transfiguration*, took place! According to Matthew, the apostles saw the Master's form, luminous and apparently

diaphanous, appear in the transparent twilight of the Eastern night. His face shone like the sun, and his garments became brilliant as the light; at his side appeared two figures, which they took for those of Moses and Elijah. As, trembling, they emerged from their strange prostration, which seemed to them at once a profounder sleep and a more intense waking state, they saw the Master alone by their side, restoring them to full consciousness by his touch. The transfigured Christ they had contemplated in this dream was never effaced from their memory (Matt. xvii. 1–8).

But what had Jesus himself seen and passed through during that night which preceded the most decisive act of his prophetic career? A gradual effacing of earthly things, beneath the ardour of prayer, a rapturous ascent from sphere to sphere. He seemed by degrees to be returning along the depths of his consciousness into some previous existence, an altogether spiritual and divine one. Far in the distance were suns, worlds, earths, vortices of suffering incarnations; now he was conscious of one homogeneous atmosphere, one fluid substance, one intelligent light. Within this radiance legions of celestial beings form a moving vault, a firmament of ethereal bodies, white as snow, whence beam forth gentle flashes of light.

On the shining cloud where he is standing six men in priestly robes, and mighty of stature, raise aloft, with joined hands, a dazzling Chalice. These are the six Messiahs who have already appeared on earth ; the seventh is himself, and this Cup signifies the Sacrifice he must undergo, by incarnating himself on earth in his turn. Beneath the cloud is heard the roar of thunder ; there yawns a black abyss ; the circle of generations, the pit of life and death, the terrestrial hell. The Sons of God with suppliant gesture raise the Cup, the very firmament of heaven is silent, as Jesus, in token of assent, extends his arms in the form of a cross as though he wished to embrace the whole universe. Then the Sons of God bow down their faces to the earth, a band of female angels, with outspread wings and downcast eyes, carry off the incandescent Chalice towards the vault of light. The *hosanna* resounds, with ineffably melodious strains, throughout the heavens. . . . But he, without even listening to it, plunges into the pit. . . .

This is what had taken place long ago among the Essenes, in the bosom of the Father, where the mysterious rites of Eternal Love are celebrated and the revolutions of the constellations pass, light as waves. This is what he had sworn to accomplish, this is the reason of his birth and

the purpose of his past struggles. And now, once more this mighty oath bound him down at the end of his task.

Terrible oath, dreaded chalice! Still, it must be drained to the dregs. After all this rapturous bliss he awoke in the depths of the pit, on the brink of martyrdom. No further doubt was possible; the time was at hand. Heaven had spoken and Earth cried aloud for help.

Retracing his steps, Jesus once again descended the valley of the Jordan, and proceeded by slow stages along the road to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM—THE PROMISE—THE SUPPER—TRIAL OF JESUS—DEATH AND RESURRECTION

"HOSANNA to the son of David!" This was the cry which greeted Jesus as he entered by the eastern gate of Jerusalem, along streets covered with branches of palm trees. They who welcomed him with such enthusiasm were adherents of the Galilean prophet who had assembled from both without and within the town to greet him with this ovation. They were welcoming him who was to free Israel, who would soon be crowned king. Even the twelve apostles still shared this illusion in spite of all Jesus had said. He alone, the proclaimed Messiah, knew that he was advancing to his death, and that only afterwards would even his disciples penetrate the inner sanctuary of his thought. Resolutely was he offering himself, of his own free will, and fully conscious of the end. Hence his resignation, his sweet serenity. As he passed beneath the colossal porch, cut in the gloomy fortress of Jerusalem, the cry resounded

beneath the vault and pursued him like the voice of Destiny, seizing its prey: "Hosanna to the son of David!"

By this solemn entrance into the city, Jesus publicly declared to the religious authorities of Jerusalem, that he took upon himself the rôle of the Messiah, with all its consequences. The following morning he appeared in the temple, in the Gentiles' Court, and, advancing towards the cattle-dealers and money-changers who by usury and the deafening jingle of money profaned the precincts of the holy place, he uttered against them Isaiah's words: "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." The dealers fled, carrying off their tables and money-bags, intimidated by the partisans of the prophet who formed a solid rampart around him, and even more terrified by his imperious gesture and flashing look. The astonished priests marvelled at this boldness and manifestation of power. A deputation from the Sanhedrim came demanding an explanation, with the words: "By what authority doest thou these things?" To this insidious question Jesus, as was his wont, replied by a question no less embarrassing for his enemies. "Whence was the baptism of John, from heaven or of men?" Had the Pharisees replied: "From

heaven," Jesus would have said: "Then why did you not believe him?" Had they said "From men," they would have had to consider the anger of the people who looked upon John the Baptist as a prophet. Accordingly, they replied: "We cannot tell." "Neither tell I you," said Jesus, "by what authority I do these things." Once the blow warded off, however, he assumed the offensive and added: "Verily I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Then in a parable, he compared them to the wicked husbandman, who kills his master's son so as to inherit the vineyard; and he called himself "the stone which had become the head of the corner, and which should grind into powder whomsoever it should fall upon." These acts and words show that, in making this final journey to Israel's capital, Jesus wished to cut off all retreat. His enemies had long been in possession of the two great keys of accusation necessary for his ruin: his threats against the temple, and the affirmation that he was the Messiah. These last attacks exasperated his enemies; from that moment his death, determined upon by the authorities, was only a matter of time. Since his entrance into Jerusalem, the most influential members of the Sanhedrim, Scribes and Pharisees,

reconciled in common hatred against Jesus, had come to an understanding on the death of this "seducer of the people." They hesitated only on the matter of seizing him in public, for they dreaded a rising of the people. On different occasions already, officials sent against him had returned, won over by his words, or alarmed at the multitudes of people. Often had the soldiers of the temple seen him disappear from their midst in mysterious fashion. So also had the Emperor Domitian, fascinated and struck with blindness so to speak, by the image he wished to condemn, seen Apollonius of Tyana disappear from before the tribunal and from the midst of his guards! The struggle between Jesus and the priests thus continued from day to day with increasing hatred on their side, and on his, an enthusiastic strength and impetuosity, given him by the certainty he felt as to the fatal issue. This was his last assault against the powers of the day; in it he manifested a mighty energy as well as the masculine force which like a coat of mail clothed that sublime tenderness of his, which might be called: The Eternal-Feminine of his soul. This formidable combat ended in terrible maledictions against these debasers of religion: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, who shut up the kingdom of heaven

against such as wish to enter in. Ye fools and blind, who pay tithes and neglect justice, pity, and fidelity; ye are like unto whited sepulchres which appear beautiful from without, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

After having thus branded as religious hypocrisy and false sacerdotal authority what had for centuries held sway, Jesus considered his struggles at an end. He left Jerusalem with his disciples and proceeded to the Mount of Olives. As they ascended, Herod's temple could be seen in all its majesty, with its terraces and vast porticoes, its sculpturing of white marble incrusted with jasper and porphyry, and its dazzling roof of gold and silver. The disciples, discouraged and under the presentiment of a catastrophe, drew the master's attention to the splendour of the building he was leaving for ever. Their words were tinged with melancholy and regret, for, to the last, they had hoped to take their seats therein as judges of Israel around the Messiah, the crowned priest-king. Jesus turned, facing the temple, and said: "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."[1] He was judging the duration of the temple of Jehovah by the moral

[1] Matthew xxiv. 2.

worth of those who ruled therein. He meant that fanaticism, intolerance, and hatred were not sufficient arms against the battle-axes and battering-rams of the Roman Cæsar. With the insight of the initiate which had become more intense through that clairvoyance given by the approach of death, he saw the Judaic pride, the policy of their king, the whole Jewish history, terminate fatally in this catastrophe. Triumph did not exist there, it was rather in the prophetic thought, the universal religion, that invisible temple which he alone at that hour had full consciousness of. As for the ancient citadel of Zion and the temple of stone, he already saw the angel of destruction standing, sword in hand, at its doors.

Jesus knew that his hour was nigh, but he did not wish to fall into the hands of the Sanhedrim, so he withdrew to Bethany. As he had a predilection for the Mount of Olives, he came there almost daily to converse with his disciples. From the summit the view was magnificent. The range of vision embraces the rugged mountains of Judæa and Moab, with their purplish-blue tints, whilst away in the distance could be caught a glimpse of the Dead Sea, like a leaden-hued mirror from whose surface rise dense sulphurous mists. At the foot of the mountain stretched Jerusalem, the Temple, and the

citadel of Zion towering above all other edifices. Even in these days, as twilight descends on the dark, mysterious gorges of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, the city of David and of the Christ, protected by the sons of Ishmael, rises in imposing majesty above these gloomy valleys. Its cupolas and minarets reflect the fading light of the heavens and seem to be ever awaiting the angels of judgment. It was there Jesus gave the disciples his final instructions regarding the future of the religion he had come to found, and the destiny of mankind, thus bequeathing them his promise—at once terrestrial and divine—intimately wedded with his esoteric teaching.

Evidently the writers of the Synoptic Gospels have handed down to us the apocalyptic sayings of Jesus amid a confusion which renders them almost impenetrable. Their meaning only begins to become intelligible in John's Gospel. If Jesus had really believed in his return on the clouds, some years after his death, as is admitted according to the naturalistic interpretation; or if he had imagined that the end of the world, and the last judgment of men would take place in this manner, as orthodox theology believes, he would have been a very ordinary visionary indeed, instead of the sage initiate, the sublime seer every word of his teaching and every action of his life proclaim him

to have been. It is evident that here, especially, his words must be understood in their allegorical signification according to the transcendent symbolism of the prophets. John's Gospel, the one which has most fully handed down to us the Master's esoteric teaching, emphasises this interpretation, so perfectly in accord as it is with the parabolical genius of Jesus, when he relates the Master's words: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. . . . These things have I spoken unto you in parables, but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father."

The solemn promise of Jesus to the apostles embraces four objects, four increasing spheres of planetary and cosmic life: the individual psychic life; the national life of Israel; the earthly evolution and end of humanity as well as the divine. Let us take one by one these four spheres through which radiates the thought of the Christ before his martyrdom, like the setting sun, filling with its glory the whole terrestrial atmosphere right to the zenith, before shining on other worlds.

1. *The first judgment* signifies the ultimate destiny of the soul after death. This is determined by its own inner nature and the acts of its life. I have already expounded this doctrine, with reference to

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. On the Mount of Olives he says to his disciples: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."[1] And again: "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."[2]

2. *The destruction of the temple and the end of Israel.* "Nation shall rise against nation. . . . They shall deliver you up to be afflicted. . . . Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."[3]

3. *The terrestrial aim of humanity* which is not fixed at some definite epoch, but must be reached by a graduated series of successive realisations. This aim is the coming of the social Christ or the divine man on earth; *i.e.* the organisation of Truth, Justice, and Love in human society, and consequently, the pacification of the nations. Isaiah had already foretold this distant epoch in a splendid vision beginning with the words: "For I know their works and their thoughts; it shall come that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign

[1] Luke xxi. 34. [2] Matthew xxiv. 44.
[3] Matthew xxiv. 4–34.

among them," &c., &c.[1] Jesus completing this prophecy explains to his disciples what this sign shall be ; the complete unveiling of the mysteries or the coming of the Holy Ghost, whom he also calls the Comforter or "the spirit of Truth which shall lead you into all truth."[2] The apostles shall have this revelation beforehand, the mass of humanity in the course of time. But whenever it takes place in an individual consciousness or among a group of men, it pierces through and through. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."[3] Thus, when the central and spiritual truth is kindled it illumines all other truths throughout creation.

4. *The last judgment* signifies the end of the cosmic evolution of humanity, or its entrance into a definitely spiritual state. This is what Persian Esoterism had called the victory of Ormuzd over the Ahrimanes, or of Spirit over Matter. Hindu Esoterism named it the complete re-absorption of matter by Spirit, or the end of a day of Brahma. After thousands of centuries a period must come when, through series of births and rebirths, incarnations and regenerations, the individuals com-

[1] Isaiah lxvi. 18, &c. [2] John xiv. 16–17.
[3] Matthew xxiv. 27.

posing a humanity shall have definitely entered the spiritual state, or been annihilated as conscious souls by evil, *i.e.* by their own passions symbolised by the fire of Gehenna and gnashing of teeth. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds. . . . He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds."[1] The *Son of man*, a generic term, here signifies humanity in its perfect representation, *i.e.* the small number of those who have raised themselves to the rank of Sons of God. His *Sign* is the Lamb and the Cross, *i.e.* Love and Eternal Life. The *Cloud* is the image of the Mysteries which have become translucent, as well as of the subtle matter transfigured by the spirit, of the fluidic substance which is no longer a dense obscure veil, but a light transparent garment of the soul, no longer a gross obstacle, but an expression of the truth; no longer a deceptive appearance but spiritual truth itself, the inner world instantaneously and directly manifested. The *Angels* who gather together the Elect are glorified spirits, who have themselves sprung from humanity. The *Trumpet* they sound symbolises the living word of the Spirit, which lays bare the

[1] Matthew xxiv. 30, 31.

real nature of the soul, and destroys all lying appearances of matter.

Jesus, feeling his end near, thus explained to his astonished disciples the lofty perspectives which from bygone times had formed part of the doctrine of the mysteries, but to which each religious founder has always given personal form and colour. To engrave these truths on their minds and facilitate their propagation, he summed them up in such images as were characterised by extreme boldness and incisive energy. The revealing image and speaking symbol formed the universal language of the ancient initiates. Such a language possesses a communicative virtue, a power of concentration and duration lacking in the abstract term. In using it, Jesus merely followed the example of Moses and the prophets. He knew the Idea would not immediately be understood, but he wished to impress it in letters of flame in the simple souls of his followers, leaving to succeeding ages the task of generating the powers contained in his word. Jesus feels himself one with all the prophets of the earth who had gone before, as he had done, messengers of Life and of the eternal Word. In this sentiment of unity and solidarity with immutable truth, he dared address to his afflicted disciples the proud words: "Heaven and

earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

These mornings and evenings on the Mount of Olives flew swiftly by. One day, obedient to an impulse peculiar to his ardent and impressionable nature, which caused him suddenly to descend from the most sublime heights to the sufferings of earth, which he felt as his own, he shed tears over Jerusalem, the holy city and its inhabitants, whose frightful destiny he foresaw. His own was also approaching with giant strides. The Sanhedrim had already discussed his fate and decided on his death. Judas Iscariot had already promised to deliver his Master into their hands. It was not sordid avarice, but rather ambition and wounded pride which occasioned this black treachery. Judas, a type of cold egoism and absolute positivism, incapable of the faintest idealism, had become a disciple of the Christ merely from a spirit of worldly speculation. He was relying on the earthly and immediate triumph of the prophet, and on his own consequent gain. The Master's profound words: He who wishes to save his life shall lose it, and he who is willing to lose it, shall save it; had no meaning for him. Jesus, in his boundless charity, had received him as one of his disciples, in the hope of changing his

nature. When Judas saw that matters were not proceeding as he wished, that Jesus and his disciples were compromised, and himself deceived in his hopes, his deception became converted into a feeling of rage. The wretch denounced the man, who, in his eyes, was only a false Messiah who had deceived him. The penetrating insight of Jesus told him what was taking place in the mind of the faithless apostle. He now determined he would no longer avoid the destiny whose inextricable folds were daily tightening around him. It was the eve of Easter, so he ordered his disciples to prepare the meal at a friend's house in the town. He foresaw it would be his last repast, and accordingly wished to give it an exceptional solemnity.

Now we enter upon the final act of the Messianic drama. In order thoroughly to understand the spirit and work of Jesus, it has been necessary to shed an inner light on the first two acts of his life: his initiation and public career. Subsequently, the inner drama of his consciousness has been unfolded. The final act of his life, or the drama of the passion, is the logical consequence of the two preceding. Since it is known to all, it explains itself, for the peculiarity of the sublime is that it is at once simple, grand, and clear. The drama

of the passion has powerfully contributed to the institution of Christianity. It has drawn tears from every human being possessed of a heart, and converted millions of souls. Throughout all these scenes the gospels are of incomparable beauty. Even John descends from his lofty heights, and his circumstantial account assumes a character of poignant truth such as an eye-witness alone could give. Every one may live again in himself the divine drama, no one could recreate it. And yet, in ending my task, I must concentrate the rays of esoteric tradition on the three essential events by which the life of the divine Master came to an end: the Holy Supper, the trial of the Messiah, and the Resurrection. If light is thrown on these points, it will be reflected backwards on the whole career of the Christ, and forwards on the succeeding history of Christianity.

The twelve, forming thirteen with the Master, had met in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. The unknown friend, Jesus' host, had covered the floor with a rich carpet. In oriental fashion the Master and his disciples reclined on four large divans in the form of triclinia arranged around the table. When the pascal lamb, and the golden chalice lent by the friend, had been brought into the room, and the vases filled with wine, Jesus,

seated between John and Peter, said: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."[1] Thereupon their countenances became overshadowed; silence filled the air. "The disciple whom Jesus loved," who alone divined everything, bowed his head on the Master's breast. As was usual among the Jews at the Easter meal, not a word was uttered as they ate the bitter herbs and charoset placed before them. Finally Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, he brake it and distributed unto them, saying: "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." He also took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."[2]

Such is the institution of the Supper in all its simplicity. It has a far wider signification than is generally granted or known, for not only is the mystical and symbolic act the conclusion and *résumé* of the entire teaching of the Christ, it is the consecration and rejuvenation of a very ancient symbol of initiation. Among the initiates of Egypt and Chaldea, as among the prophets and Essenes, the fraternal agape marked the first

[1] Luke xxii. 15, 16. [2] Luke xxii. 19.

stage of initiation. The Communion, under the element of bread, the fruit of the sheaf, signified knowledge of the mysteries of earthly life, as well as a sharing of terrestrial blessings, and consequently the perfect union of affiliated brothers. In the higher degree, communion under the element of wine, the blood of the vine, penetrated through and through by the sun, signified the sharing of heavenly blessings, a participation in spiritual mysteries and divine science. Jesus, in bequeathing these symbols to the apostles, enlarged their meaning. Through them he extends to the whole of mankind fraternity and initiation, formerly limited to the few. To them he adds the profoundest of mysteries, the greatest of forces, that of his own sacrifice. This he converts into the invisible but infrangible chain of love between himself and his followers. It will give his glorified soul a divine power over their hearts, as well as over the hearts of all men. This cup of truth which had come from distant prophetic ages, this golden chalice of initiation which the old Essene had offered him in addressing him as prophet, this chalice of celestial love the Sons of God had offered him in the ecstasy of his loftiest rapture—this cup in which he now sees his own blood reflected—he now gives over to

his well-beloved disciples with the ineffable tenderness of a last farewell.

Do the apostles see and understand this redeeming, world-embracing thought? It shines in the Master's profound though sorrowful glance, as he turns from the "disciple he loved" to the one about to betray him. No, they do not yet understand; they seem to breathe with difficulty, as though under the power of some frightful dream; a kind of heavy, ruddy vapour floats in the air, and they wonder as to the source of that strange radiance about the Christ head. When, finally, Jesus tells them that he is about to spend the night in prayer on the Mount of Olives, and, as he rises, requests them to follow him, they no longer doubt as to what is about to happen.

. . . . . .

The night is past; the anguish of Gethsemane at an end. With terrifying clearness he has seen the infernal circle about to destroy him grow less and less. In the horror of the situation, and the dreadful momentary expectation of being seized by his enemies, a shudder passed through his frame; for a moment his soul shrank before the tortures that awaited him; drops of bloody sweat stood on his brow. Then prayer came to his aid. . . . Confused cries, torches flashing

beneath the gloomy olive-trees, the clash of arms, were so many signs testifying to the approach of a band of soldiers sent by the Sanhedrim. Judas, at their head, kisses his Master, so that they may recognise the prophet. Jesus returns the kiss with a look of ineffable compassion, and says to him: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" The effect of this gentleness, this brotherly kiss given in exchange for the basest treason, will be such on that heart—notwithstanding its hardness—that, a moment later, Judas, overcome with horror and remorse, will take his own life. And now, with rude, cruel hands, the soldiers have seized the Galilean rabbi. After a brief resistance the terrified disciples have fled. Peter and John alone remain at hand, and follow the Master to the tribunal. Their hearts are well-nigh broken as they anxiously await his fate. Jesus has now regained control over himself; from that moment not a single protest or complaint will break from his lips.

The entire Sanhedrim is hastily assembled, and Jesus is brought into their presence at midnight, for the court is determined to deal promptly with the dangerous prophet. Priests and sacrificers, turbans on their heads and wearing purple, yellow and violet tunics, are solemnly seated in a semi-

circle. In their midst sits Caiaphas, the chief priest, wearing on his head the "migbâh"; at each end of the arc, on two small tribunes sit the clerks, one for acquittal, the other for condemnation: *advocatus Dei, advocatus Diaboli.* Jesus, in his white Essenian robe, stands impressive in the centre. Officers of justice, armed with ropes and thongs, men with bared arms and evil-looking eyes, stand around. Witnesses for the accusation alone are present; there is not one for the defence. The high priest, the supreme magistrate, is the principal accuser; the trial, apparently a measure of public safety against a crime or religious treason, is in reality the preventive vengeance of an anxious priesthood which feels its power in danger.

Caiaphas rises and accuses Jesus of being a seducer of the people, a "mésit." A few witnesses taken at hazard from the crowd give their depositions, but only succeed in contradicting one another. Finally, one of them reports the words of Jesus, "I can destroy the temple, and build it again in three days"—words which had been considered blasphemous, and which the Nazarene had more than once flung in the face of the Pharisees under Solomon's porch. Jesus holds his peace. "Answerest thou nothing?" asks the high priest.

Jesus, who knows he will be condemned, and is unwilling to lavish words to no purpose, still makes no reply. These words, however, even if proved, would not form sufficient motive for a death penalty. A graver avowal is needed. To force one, Caiaphas, the cunning Sadducee, addresses him a question involving his honour, the vital question of his mission. The greatest skill often consists in going straight to the root of a matter. "If thou art the Messiah, say so now!" Jesus at first replies evasively, thus proving that he is not their dupe. "If I say it, you will not believe me, but if I ask you the same question you will give me no answer." As Caiaphas does not succeed in his artifice, he uses his authority as high priest, and solemnly says: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Thus called upon either to retract or to affirm his mission before the highest representative of the religion of Israel, Jesus no longer hesitates. He replies calmly, "Thou hast said. Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thus expressing himself in the prophetic language of Daniel, and of the book of Henoch, Jehoshoua, the Essene initiate, does not address Caiaphas as an

individual. He knows that the Sadducee agnostic is incapable of understanding him, and accordingly speaks to the sovereign priest of Jehovah, and through him to all future priests and priesthoods of earth, saying to them: After my mission, sealed by death, the reign of unexplained religious Law is at an end, both in principle and in deed. The Mysteries shall be revealed, and man shall see the divine through the human. Religions and acts of worship which cannot be demonstrated and vivified by one another shall be void of authority. This, according to the esoterism of the prophets and Essenes, is the meaning of the Son sitting on the right hand of the Father. Thus understood, Jesus' reply to the high priest of Jerusalem contains the intellectual and scientific testament of the Christ to the religious authorities of the earth, just as the institution of the Supper contains his testament of love and initiation to the Apostles and to mankind in general.

In addressing Caiaphas Jesus spoke to the whole world. The Sadducee, however, who had obtained what he wished, listens to nothing more. Tearing his vestment of fine linen, he exclaims: "He has blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard his blasphemy; what think ye of it?" A gloomy though ominous murmur

arose from the Sanhedrim: "He is guilty of death." Immediately vile insults and brutal outrage on the part of those of lower rank gave answer to the condemnation uttered by their superiors. The guards spit on him and strike him in the face, as they exclaim: "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Beneath this outburst of low and savage hatred, the pale sublime countenance of the great sufferer resumes its visionary marble fixity. Some one has said that there are statues which weep; there is indeed a tearless grief, victims' unuttered prayers, full of terror to their assailants whom they pursue for the remainder of their lives.

All was not yet over, however. The Sanhedrim may pronounce the death penalty, the secular power and the consent of the Roman authorities are needed to put it into execution. The interview with Pilate, related in detail by John, is no less remarkable than that with Caiaphas. This strange dialogue between the Christ and the Roman governor, to which the violence of the Jewish priests, and the cries of a fanatical populace, play the part of an ancient tragedy chorus, gives the conviction of a mighty dramatic truth, for it lays bare the souls of the different characters, and shows the clash of the three powers in play: Roman Cæsarism,

bigoted Judaism, and the universal religion of the Spirit represented by the Christ. Pilate, totally indifferent to the religious quarrel, but greatly troubled over the matter, for he is afraid the death of Jesus will occasion a rising of the people, questions him with a certain amount of precaution, and offers him a means of escape, in the hope that he will take advantage of it. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered: "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate asked: "Then thou art a king?" Jesus again replied: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Pilate no more understands this affirmation of the spiritual royalty of Jesus than Caiaphas understood his religious testament. "What is truth?" he remarks, with a shrug of the shoulders. The sceptical Roman knight's question reveals the state of mind in which the heathen world then was, as it does that of all society in a state of decadence. All the same, as he did not see in the accused Jesus anything other than a harmless dreamer, he added: "I find no fault in him," and proposes to the Jews that he should liberate him. The populace, however, instigated by the priests, cries aloud: "Release unto us Barabbas!" Then Pilate, who detests the Jews, gives himself the ironical pleasure

of causing their pretended king to be beaten with rods. He thinks this will satisfy the fanatics, but they only become the more furious, and madly exclaim: "Crucify him!"

In spite of this outburst of popular passion, Pilate still resists. He is tired of being cruel. Throughout his life he has seen so much blood-shed, punished with death so many rebels, and heard so many groans and curses without his equanimity being troubled in the slightest. But the mute, stoic suffering of the Galilean prophet beneath the purple cloak and crown of thorns has sent a hitherto unknown thrill through his very being. In a strange fugitive vision he utters the words, with no idea of their import: "Ecce Homo! Behold the Man!" The stern hard-hearted Roman is almost overcome with emotion; he is on the point of pronouncing a sentence of acquittal. The priests of the Sanhedrim, with eyes intently fixed on him, see his emotion, and are filled with terror in consequence; they feel that their prey is escaping them. Craftily they deliberate among themselves. After a few moments they raise their right hands, and, turning aside their heads with horrified gesture, exclaim in one voice: "He has made himself the Son of God!"

When Pilate heard that saying, says John, his

fear increased. Fear of what? What meaning had this for the unbelieving Roman, who heartily despised both the Jews and their religion, and believed in none other than Cæsar, and the political religion of Rome? . . . There is a serious reason for this. Although different meanings were given to it, the expression "Son of God" was tolerably well known in ancient esoterism, and Pilate, although sceptical, was not altogether free from superstition. At Rome, in the Minor Mysteries of Mithras, in which Roman knights became initiated, he had heard that a Son of God was a kind of interpreter of divinity. To whatever nation or religion he belonged, an attempt on his life was a great crime. Pilate had little faith in these Persian reveries, but the name troubled him nevertheless, and increased his embarrassment. Seeing this, the Jews fling at the proconsul the final accusation: "If thou settest free this man, thou art no friend of Cæsar's; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. . . . We have no king but Cæsar." Irresistible argument; denying God is of little import, but conspiring against Cæsar is the crime of crimes. Pilate is obliged to give way and pronounce sentence of condemnation. Thus, at the end of his public career Jesus finds himself face to face with the master of the world, against whom

he—an occult opponent—has fought indirectly all his life. The shadow of Cæsar sends him to the cross! Profound is the logic of events; the Jews have delivered him up to judgment, but it is the Roman spectre which stretches out its hand to kill. The body indeed is destroyed, but it is he, the glorified Christ, whose martyrdom will for ever deprive Cæsar of the aureole he has usurped, the divine apotheosis, this infernal blasphemy of absolute power.

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Pilate, after washing his hands of the blood of the innocent Jesus, now utters the terrible words: *Condemno, ibis in crucem;* and the impatient mob hurries away in the direction of Golgotha.

Following them we find ourselves on the barren heights overlooking Jerusalem, and bearing the name of Gilgal, Golgotha, or place of skulls; a sinister desert covered with human bones, for centuries the scene of horrible punishments. Not a tree can be seen, the ground seems to bristle with gibbets. It is here that Alexander Janneus had come with his whole harem to witness the execution of hundreds of prisoners; here that Varus had crucified two thousand rebels; and now the gentle Messiah, whose coming had been foretold by the prophets, was on this same spot to

undergo the terrible death penalty, invented by the atrocious genius of the Phœnicians, and adopted by the implacable law of Rome. The cohort of the legionaries has formed a mighty circle on the top of the hill; they drive away with their lances the few followers who remained faithful to the condemned Christ. These are Galilean women, mute with despair, who fling themselves on the ground before the cross. The final hour has come; the defender of the poor, the feeble and the oppressed, must finish his task in that state of abject martyrdom reserved for slaves and robbers. The prophet, consecrated by the Essenes, must allow himslf to be nailed to the cross he had accepted in the vision of Engaddi; the Son of God must drink of the chalice which had appeared to him in the Transfiguration, and must descend into the depths of hell and of all earthly horror. . . . He has refused the traditional drink prepared by the pious women of Jerusalem, and which is intended to deaden the sufferings of the crucified victims. In fullest consciousness will he suffer the agony of death. Bound to the cruel gibbet, as the stern hard-hearted soldiers with mighty hammer-blows drive the nails into those feet, the object of such passionate reverence, and through those hands never raised except in blessing, a dull mist of

horrible pain closes his eyes and chokes his throat. Still, amid such convulsions of pain and infernal anguish, the Saviour pleads for his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now the cup is being drained to its dregs; the death-agony lasts from noon to sunset. Moral is added to physical torture, which it surpasses in malignity. The initiate has abdicated his powers, the Son of God is about to suffer eclipse; only the man of sorrows remains. For a few hours he will lose his heaven, to measure and fathom the depths of the abyss of human suffering. There stands the cross with its victim, and the superscription —the proconsul's final shaft of irony—"This is the King of the Jews!" As through a mist of anguish, the crucified one sees the holy city Jerusalem he wished to glorify now hurling anathemas against him. Where are his disciples? They have disappeared in all directions. He hears nothing but the insults of the members of the Sanhedrim, who, imagining that the prophet is no longer to be feared, exult with joy at his death-struggles. "He saved others," they say; "himself he cannot save!" Through such perverse blasphemies Jesus sees, in terrifying prophetic vision, all the crimes that unjust potentates and

fanatical priests are to commit in his name. With his own sign will they pronounce maledictions, and with his own cross will they crucify. It is not the gloomy silence of the heavens veiled against him, but rather the light, lost to humanity, which tears from him the despairing wail: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, in one final burst, there springs forth from his soul the cry, "It is finished!"

Sublime Nazarene, divine Son of Man, even now is the victory thine. Doubtless thy soul has once again found, in light more dazzling than before, the heaven of Engaddi and Mount Tabor! Down through the ages hast thou seen thy word fleeting victorious, and no other glory hast thou desired than the uplifted hands and eyes of those thou hast healed and comforted. . . . Even now a shudder of dread comes over thy torturers, as they listen to thy final words so full of meaning but which they do not understand. The Roman soldiers have turned to gaze at the strange radiance thy spirit has left on the tranquil countenance of this corpse, whilst thy slayers look at one another in wonder and say: "Could this have been a God?"

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Is the drama really finished? Is the silent though

formidable strife now at an end, the struggle between divine Love and Death which has united with the reigning powers of earth to overwhelm him, at last closed? Where is the victor? Does triumph remain with those self-satisfied priests as they descend from Calvary well pleased with their deed, for they have seen the prophet breathe his last, or with this pale crucified Christ, already livid in death? For these faithful, weeping women, whom the Roman legionaries have permitted to approach the foot of the cross, as well as for the terror-stricken disciples who have taken refuge in the grotto of Jehoshaphat, all is indeed at an end. The Messiah, who was to be enthroned at Jerusalem, has died an infamous death on the cross. The Master has disappeared, and with him hope, the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven itself. A gloomy silence of deep despair hangs over the small community. Even Peter and John are overwhelmed with grief. Darkness is all around; not a single ray illumines their souls. And yet, just as, in the Eleusinian mysteries, profound darkness is followed by a dazzling light, so, in the Gospels, this deep despair is succeeded by a sudden miraculous joy which bursts forth like a beam of light at sunrise, and the joyful cry resounds throughout Judæa: "He is risen again!"

Mary Magdalene, wandering near the tomb in

the excess of her grief, was the first to see the Master, and to recognise him by his voice as he uttered her name, Mary! Overcome with joy, she threw herself at his feet. Again she saw Jesus look at her, and wave his hand as though to prevent her touching him; then the apparition suddenly vanished, leaving around the Magdalene an atmosphere of warmth and the delight of a real presence. Afterwards the holy women met the Lord, who said to them: "Go and tell my brethren to proceed to Galilee, there they shall see me." That same evening, as the eleven were met in private, they saw Jesus enter the room. He took a seat in their midst, and gently reproached them for their unbelief. Then he said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They listened to him as in a dream, for they seemed to have completely forgotten his death, and were persuaded that the Master would not again leave them. However, just as they were about to speak, they saw him disappear from their midst like a vanishing light. The echo of his voice still vibrated in their ears. The apostles, amazed, sought the spot where he had been; there still lingered a vague light, which quickly disappeared. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus appeared once more on a mountain to five hundred of the brethren assembled by the apostles. He also showed himself again to the

eleven, after which the apparitions ceased. Faith, however, had been created, the first impulse given, and Christianity was a living force. The apostles, filled with the sacred fire, went about healing the sick and preaching their Master's gospel. Three years afterwards, a young Pharisee, named Saul, animated by violent hatred against the new religion, whose defenders he persecuted with all the vigour of youth, journeyed to Damascus, accompanied by several companions. On the way he saw himself suddenly enveloped in so dazzling a flame of fire, that he fell to the earth. Trembling, he exclaimed: "Who art thou?" A voice replied: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul's terrified companions raised him to his feet. They had heard the voice though they had seen nothing. The young man, blinded by the flash, recovered his sight only three days afterwards.

Converted to the faith of the Christ, he became Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. On this one point is the whole world agreed, that but for Saul's conversion Christianity, confined as it was to Judæa, would never have conquered the Western world.

Such are the facts as related in the New Testament. Whatever efforts be made to reduce their results to a minimum, and whatever be the religious or philosophical idea attached to them, they cannot be regarded as legends, pure and simple, and

refused the value of authentic testimony on all essential points. For eighteen centuries the waves of doubt and denial have assailed the rock of this testimony; for a hundred years the weapons of criticism have been directed against it. Breaches have been effected in places, but its position remains steadfast. What is there behind the visions of the apostles? Elementary theologians, interpreters of the letter, and agnostic savants may dispute for ever; they will never convert one another, and their reasonings will be in vain, so long as Theosophy, the science of the Spirit, has not enlarged their conceptions, and a superior experimental psychology, the art of laying bare the soul, left their eyes unopened. But from the standpoint of the conscientious historian, *i.e.* the authenticity of these facts as psychical actualities, there is one point on which doubt is impossible: that the apostles had these apparitions, and that it was impossible to shake their faith in the resurrection of the Christ. If John's account be rejected on the ground of its definite compilation about a hundred years after the death of Jesus, and also Luke's account of the Christ's appearance to the disciples at Emmaus regarded as a mere poetical amplification, there still remain the simple and positive affirmations of Matthew and Mark, which lie at the very root of the Christian tradition and religion. And even more

solid and indisputable is the testimony of Paul. Wishing to explain to the Corinthians the reason of his faith and the basis of the gospel he preaches, he enumerates in order six successive appearances of Jesus: those to Peter, to the eleven, to the five hundred, "most of whom," he says, "are still living"; to James, to the assembled apostles, and finally, his own vision on the way to Damascus. These facts were communicated to Paul by Peter himself, and by James, three years after the death of Jesus, just after Paul's conversion, at the time of his first journey to Jerusalem. Accordingly he received them from eye-witnesses. Finally, the most indisputable of all these visions is by no means the least extraordinary; I refer to that of Paul himself. He continually alludes to it in his Epistles as being the source of his faith. Given the former psychological condition of Paul and the nature of his vision, we see it is from without, not from within. Of an unexpected and terrifying character, it completely changes his whole being. Like a baptism of fire, it descends upon him, clothes him in a new and impenetrable armour, and establishes him in the sight of the whole world as the invincible champion of the Christ.

Paul's testimony accordingly possesses a double authority, in so far as it confirms his own vision and corroborates those of the others. Whoever

might feel inclined to doubt the sincerity of such affirmations would be obliged to reject *en masse* all historical testimony, and to renounce the writing of history. Note, too, that if critical history is incompatible with an exact weighing and well-thought-out selection of all the documents, philosophical history would also be impossible, if greatness of effects could not be referred back to greatness of causes. It would be possible with Celsus, Strauss, and M. Renan to refuse all objective value to the resurrection, and consider it as a phenomenon resulting from pure hallucination. If so, one is obliged to found the greatest religious revolution of humanity on an aberration of the senses and a mere delusion of the mind.[1] There can be no denying that faith in the resurrection is the basis of historical Christianity. But for this confirmation of Jesus' teaching by a dazzling fact, his religion would not even have had a beginning.

This event effected a complete revolution in the souls of the apostles. In consequence of it their whole mental attitude, from being Judaic, became Christian. The Christ is living in glory, he has spoken to them. The heavens have opened; the life beyond has entered into the life within, the dawn of immortality has touched them and kindled

[1] Strauss says: "The fact of the resurrection is explicable only as 'ein welthistorischer humbug.'" The expression is rather cynical than witty, and does not explain the visions of the apostles and of Paul.

their souls with a fire which nothing can extinguish. Above Israel's tottering earthly kingdom, they have caught a glimpse of the world-wide heavenly kingdom in all its glory. Hence their eagerness for the strife, their joy in martyrdom. Jesus' resurrection gives birth to this mighty impulse and hope which carries the gospel to all nations and the good tidings to the utmost limits of earth. For the success of Christianity two things were necessary, as Fabre d'Olivet has said : that Jesus should be willing to die, and that he should have the power to rise again.

To form a rational idea of the fact of the resurrection, and understand its religious and philosophical bearing, one must consider only the phenomenon of the successive appearances, and, from the very outset, remove from one's mind the absurd idea of the resurrection of the body, one of the greatest stumbling-blocks of Christian dogma, which, in this particular as in many others, has remained at quite a childish and rudimentary stage. The disappearance of Jesus' body can be explained by natural causes, and it is worthy of note that the bodies of several great adepts have disappeared quite as mysteriously and without leaving the slightest trace. It has never been discovered what became of the bodies of Moses, Pythagoras, and Apollonius of Tyana. Possibly the brothers, known or unknown, who kept watch

over them, destroyed by fire their master's body, to prevent pollution at the hands of enemies. In any case, it is only when regarded from the esoteric point of view that the scientific aspect and spiritual grandeur of the resurrection really appear.

By Egyptians as by Persians, of the religion of Zoroaster, both before and after Jesus, by Israelites and by Christians of the first and second centuries, the resurrection has been interpreted in two ways, the one material and absurd, the other spiritual and theosophical. The first is the popular idea, finally adopted by the Church after the repression of gnosticism; the second is the profound idea of the initiates. According to the first view, the resurrection signifies the return to life of the material body; in a word, the reconstitution of the decomposed or dispersed corpse, so it was imagined, was destined to take place at the coming of the Messiah, or at the Last Judgment. It is useless to insist on the gross materialism and absurdity of this conception. To the initiate the resurrection has a far different meaning. It refers to the doctrine of the ternary constitution of man. It signifies the purification and regeneration of the sidereal, ethereal, and fluidic body, which is the very organism of the soul. This purification may take place commencing from the present life, through the inner work of the soul, and a certain

method of existence; although, for the generality of mankind, it finds accomplishment only after death, and then for those only who, in one way or another, have aspired towards justice and truth. In the other world hypocrisy is impossible. There souls appear as they are in reality, they fatally manifest themselves under the form and colour of their essence; dark and hideous if they are evil; radiant and beautiful if they are good. Such is the doctrine given by Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where he formally says: "There is an animal body and there is a spiritual body."[1] Jesus states this symbolically but with greater profundity for those who can read between the lines in the secret conversation with Nicodemus. Now, the more a soul is spiritualised, the farther will it be from the earthly atmosphere; the farther away the cosmic region which attracts it by the law of affinity, the more difficult its manifestation to men.

Accordingly, superior souls seldom manifest themselves to man, except in a state of ecstasy or profound slumber. Then, the physical eyes being closed, the soul, half detached from the body, itself sees souls at times. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that a mighty prophet, a veritable son of God, manifests himself to his own in the waking state of consciousness, the better to

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 39–46.

persuade them by a striking appeal to sense and imagination. In such instances the disincarnated soul succeeds in momentarily giving its spiritual body a visible, sometimes even a tangible appearance, by means of the special dynamics exercised by spirit over matter, through the intermediary of the electrical forces of the atmosphere and the magnetic forces of living bodies.

Apparently this is what happened in the case of Jesus. The appearances related in the New Testament may be placed in one or the other, alternately, of these two categories—spiritual vision and sense apparition. What is certain is that they possessed for the apostles the character of supreme reality. They would rather have doubted the existence of heaven and earth than their living communion with the resurrected Christ ; for these soul-stirring appearances formed the brightest events in their lives, the profoundest truth of which they were conscious. There is nothing supernatural in them though there is an unknown element in Nature, its occult continuation into the Infinite, the flashes of the invisible on the confines of the visible. In our present corporeal state we can scarcely believe or even conceive of the reality of the impalpable ; in the spiritual state, it is matter which will appear to us the unreal and non-existent. In the Spirit is found the synthesis of soul and matter, two phases

of the one substance. Reverting to eternal principles and final causes, it is the innate laws of intelligence which explain the dynamics of nature, as it is the study of the soul, by experimental psychology which explains the laws of life.

Consequently the resurrection, esoterically understood as I have just pointed out, was at once the necessary conclusion of the life of Jesus and the indispensable preface to the historical evolution of Christianity,—necessary conclusion, for Jesus had on several occasions announced it to his disciples. The power of appearing to them in triumphant glory after his death was due to the purity and innate force of his soul, increased a hundred fold by the grandeur of the effort and of the accomplished work.

Regarded from without, and from an earthly point of view, the Messianic drama ends on the cross. Though sublime in itself, there is yet lacking the fulfilment of the promise. Regarded from within, from the inmost consciousness of the Christ, and from the heavenly point of view, the drama contains three acts, whose summits are marked by the Temptation, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection. These three phases represent in other terms, the Initiation of the Christ, the total Revelation, and the Crowning of the work. They correspond to what the apostles and the Christian

initiates of the first centuries called the Mysteries of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A necessary crowning, as I have said, of the life of the Christ, and an indispensable preface to the historical evolution of Christianity. The ship, built on the beach, needed to be launched on the ocean. The resurrection was, in addition, as a flood of light thrown on the whole esoteric life of Jesus. We have no occasion for astonishment at finding that the early Christians were, so to speak, dazzled and blinded by the wonderful event, that they often gave a literal interpretation to the Master's teaching, and mistook the meaning of his words. But in these days, now that the human spirit has traversed ages, religions, and sciences, we can divine what a Saint Paul, a Saint John, what Jesus himself understood by the mysteries of the Father and of the Spirit. We see that they contained the very highest and truest elements of the psychical science and theosophic intuition of the East. We also see the power of renewed expansion given by the Christ to the ancient eternal truth by the grandeur of his love and the energy of his will. Finally, we see the metaphysical and practical side of Christianity, the cause of its power and vitality.

The old theosophists of Asia were acquainted with transcendent truths. The Brahmans even found the key to the past and future life by

formulating the organic law of reincarnation and the alternation of lives. In entering the life beyond, however, and contemplating Eternity, they forgot terrestrial realisation, individual and social life. Greece, at first initiated into the same truths under more veiled and anthropomorphic forms, became attached by its very genius to the natural terrestrial life. This enabled it to reveal the immortal laws of Beauty, and to formulate the principles of the sciences of observation. From this point of view, its conception of the life beyond gradually diminished and darkened. Jesus, in his breadth and universality, embraces both sides of life. In the Lord's Prayer, which sums up his teaching, he says: "Thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven." Now the kingdom of the divine on earth signifies the fulfilment of the moral and social law in all its richness, in all the glory of the Beautiful, the Good, and the True. Thus the magic of his doctrine, his—in a sense—unlimited power of development, dwell in the unity of his moral and metaphysical aspects, his ardent faith in the life eternal, and the necessity he felt of beginning it in the world by a life of action and love. The Christ says to the soul, cast down by earthly trouble: "Rise; heaven is thy fatherland; still, in order to believe this and to attain thereto, prove it here below by deeds of love."

CHAPTER VII

THE PROMISE AND ITS FULFILMENT—THE TEMPLE

"IN three days I will destroy the temple, and in three days I will build it up again." This was said to his disciples by the Son of Mary, the Essene consecrated as Son of Man, *i.e.* the spiritual inheritor of the Word of Moses, of Hermes, and of all the former Sons of God. Has this bold promise, the word of the initiator and initiate, been realised? Yes, if consideration be taken of the consequences which the teaching of the Christ, confirmed by his death and spiritual resurrection, have had for humanity, and all the consequences his promise holds over a limitless future. His word and sacrifice have laid the foundations of an invisible temple, but it is only continued and brought to completion in proportion as each individual, throughout all time, contributes to the work.

What is this temple? It is of a nature at once moral, social, and physical, the temple of regenerate humanity.

The moral temple is the regeneration of the human soul, the transformation of individuals by the human ideal offered as an example to humanity in the person of Jesus. The wonderful harmony and plenitude of his virtues make it difficult to define ; balanced reason, mystic intuition, human sympathy, power of word and action ; infinite compassion, love even unto sacrifice, courage unto death ; no experience was unknown to him. There was sufficient soul in every drop of his blood to make a hero, and yet, what divine gentleness was his ! The profound union of heroism and love, of will and intelligence, of the Eternal-Masculine with the Eternal-Feminine make of him the flower of the human ideal. His whole moral teaching, whose loftiest expression is unending brotherly love and a universal human alliance, flows naturally from such a mighty personality. The work of the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since his death has resulted in the inculcating of this ideal in the consciousness of all mankind. For there is scarcely a man throughout the civilised world who does not possess a more or less clear notion thereof. Accordingly, it may be affirmed that the moral temple desired by the Christ is, if not finished, at any rate based on an indestructible foundation at the present day.

It is not so with the social temple. This supposes the establishment of the kingdom of God or of the providential law in the organic institutions of humanity ; it remains to be constructed from the foundation. For men still live in a state of warfare under the law of Force and Destiny. The law of the Christ, which remains in the moral conscience, has not yet passed into human institutions. I have only incidentally touched upon questions of social and political organisation in this book, which is solely intended to throw light on the philosophical and religious question at its base, through some of the essential esoteric truths. In these few concluding words I will not discuss the question any further. It is too vast and complex, and beyond my power to attempt even to define it within the compass of a few words. I will merely say that social warfare exists, as a principle, in all European countries. There are no economic, religious, or social principles admitted by all classes of society. The nations of Europe, also, have not ceased existing in a state of open war or armed peace with one another. They are united by no common federative principle. Their interests and common aspirations appeal to no recognised authority, they have no sanction before any supreme tribunal. If the law of the Christ has penetrated into individual

consciousness and, up to a certain point, into social life, it is still the pagan and barbarian law which governs our political institutions. At the present time, political power is everywhere constituted on insufficient foundations. On the one hand it emanates from the so-called divine right of kings, which is none other than military force; on the other from universal suffrage, which is simply the instinct of the masses, or mere average intelligence. A nation is not a number of uniform values or ciphers; it is a living being composed of organs. So long as national representation is not the image of this organisation, right from its working to its teaching classes, there will be no organic or intelligent national representation. So long as the delegates of all scientific bodies, and the whole of the Christian churches do not sit together in one upper council, our societies will be governed by instinct, by passion, and by might, and there will be no social temple.

Then how comes it that, rising above the Church which is too small to contain him in his entirety, above politics which deny him, and above Science which only half understands him, the Christ is fuller of life than ever? It is because his sublime morality is the corollary of a science even more sublime. Behind him we perceive, contemporary

with and beyond the time of Moses, the whole ancient theosophy of Indian, Egyptian, and Grecian initiates, of whom he forms a striking confirmation. We are beginning to understand that Jesus, at the very height of his consciousness, the transfigured Christ, is opening his loving arms to his brothers, the other Messiahs who preceded him, beams of the Living Word as he was, that he is opening them wide to Science in its entirety, Art in its divinity, and Life in its completeness. But his promise cannot be fulfilled without the help of all the living forces of humanity. Two main things are necessary nowadays for the continuation of the mighty work: on the one hand, the progressive unfolding of experimental science and intuitive philosophy to facts of psychic order, intellectual principles, and spiritual proofs; on the other, the expansion of Christian dogma in the direction of tradition and esoteric science, and subsequently a reorganisation of the Church according to a graduated initiation; this by a free and irresistible movement of all Christian churches, which are also equally daughters of the Christ. Science must become religious and religion scientific. This double evolution, already in preparation, would finally and forcibly bring about a reconciliation of Science and Religion on esoteric

grounds. The work will not progress without considerable difficulty at first, but the future of European Society depends on it. The transformation of Christianity in its esoteric sense would bring with it that of Judaism and Islam, as well as a regeneration of Brahminism and Buddhism in the same fashion ; it would accordingly furnish a religious basis for the reconciliation of Asia and Europe.

This is the spiritual temple to be constructed, the crowning of the word intuitively conceived and desired by Jesus. Can his message of Love form the magnetic chain of Science and Art, of religions and peoples, and thus become the universal word ?

At the present time the Christ is master of the globe, through the two youngest and most vigorous races, still full of faith. By way of Russia he has a foothold in Asia, and through the Anglo-Saxon race he rules the New World. Europe is older than America, but younger than Asia. They slander Europe, who believe her destined to an irremediable decadence. Still, if she continues her internal struggles, instead of federating beneath the rule of one capable authority, at once scientific and religious ; if, through the extinction of this faith which is only the love-fed light of the spirit,

she is continuing the preparation for her moral and social decomposition, her civilisation runs the risk of perishing, first by social upheavals, and afterwards by the invasion of younger races, which will seize the torch dropped from her hands.

Surely she has a more glorious part to play, the preservation of the guiding of the world, by finishing the social work of the Christ, formulating his complete and perfected thought, and crowning by the help of Science, Art, and Justice, the spiritual temple of the greatest of the Sons of God.

THE END

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